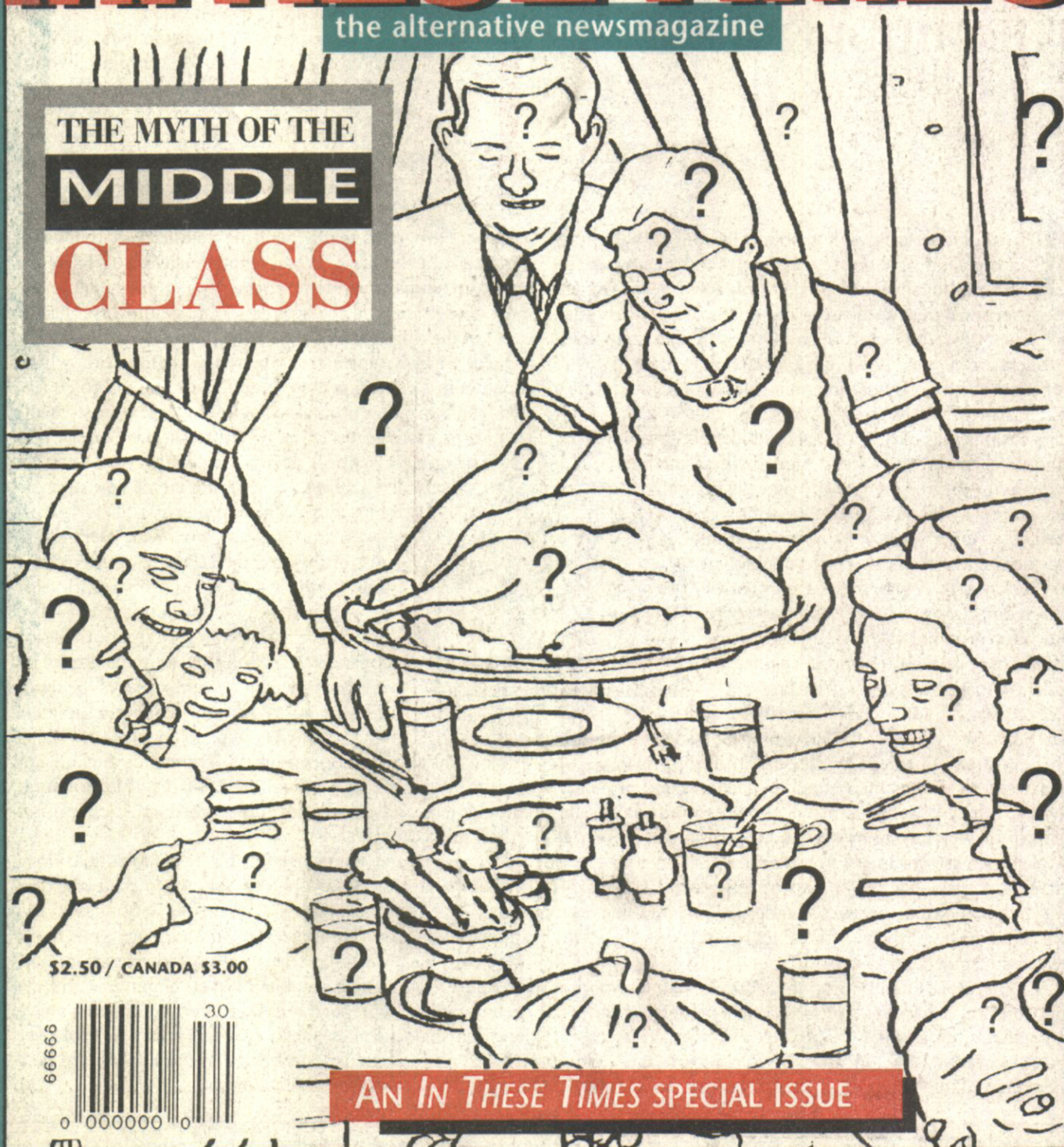


TOP STORY: Rep. Ronald V. Dellums on Clinton's foreign follies
July 26 - August 8, 1993

IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

THE MYTH OF THE MIDDLE CLASS



\$2.50 / CANADA \$3.00



AN IN THESE TIMES SPECIAL ISSUE

EDITORIAL

THE DEMOCRATS AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

The middle class is hot politically. Bill Clinton and the Democrats are earnestly competing with Republicans—not to mention Ross Perot—over who is most devoted to this sector's welfare. This comes at a time when the middle class is shrinking, and many one-time members are slipping down a ladder that they thought went only up. Yet it's not surprising politicians should look to the middle class. That's where the votes are.

It's curious that most people should identify themselves as "middle class" in the United States, where income inequality is greater than in any other industrialized country. But it's an elastic notion that stretches over a wide variety of economic and social circumstances. The term popularly refers not to ownership or control of income-producing property as much as to middling income. It encompasses those striving hard and more or less "making it," neither desperate nor on easy street.

Effectively, "middle class" describes a loose social coalition of relatively successful blue-collar workers and white-collar clerical and technical employees, as well as many middle managers and professionals. But it is defined in the popular mind mainly in terms of relative buying power (and social status), reflecting people's lives as consumers, not as producers.

It is an uneasy alliance—in part because, as the U.S. economy has stagnated for two decades, many middle-class Americans have allied with the elites in attacking their fellow class members as "overpaid."

"Middle class" gains force in contrast with the poor. Impoverished Americans are most often thought of not as unfortunates but as what used to be called the "undeserving poor," nowadays "the underclass." In contemporary political imagery, "middle class" is shaded as white, and "poor"

as dark, despite any contrary statistics. The middle class has been successfully persuaded that they are losing out because of the indulgence of the undeserving, minority poor, not because of the irresponsibility of rich elites. It is easier to stigmatize a social class when it can be ethnically stereotyped.

It is hypocritical that so many in the middle class rail against government largesse to the poor when the benefits of government tend to increase as income rises (for example, through tax breaks, such as the home interest deduction, and spending on education).

For their part, conservatives, having attacked the safety net for the poor, would now like to shred those supports for the middle class. The Senate cuts in Medicare, absent some real health care reform, are likely to do just that.

The Democrats should not simply pander to the middle class. They should construct uni-

versalistic programs that benefit the middle class, the working class and the poor. Where appropriate, those universal programs should provide progressively more benefits to the most needy. High on the agenda should be universal health care (on the single-payer model as *In These Times* has often argued), massive infrastructure renewal (much of which should aim to strengthen the inner cities) and aid to education. (An education program should at the very least equalize classroom educational expenditures at elementary and secondary schools across the country, as well as broaden access to college and create new apprenticeships and technical training.)

Over the long run, however, Democrats must go beyond direct and indirect income redistribution toward the distribution of power and rights. The concerns of the "middle class" are now largely those of consumers responding to a market. The vitality of the country and the well-being of the vast majority require a change in political thinking to emphasize people's roles and rights as citizens, not consumers. Those must include not simply rights to medical care, affordable housing, employment and equal education (which in itself cannot redress handicaps of class).

Rights of citizens must include greater democratic control of all social institutions, from local schools to giant corporations. That can start with strengthening labor laws and unions, expanding employees' rights and their means of expressing their views, and new national chartering of corporations to guarantee accountability to employees and the general public. With such a change, the country can revive Jeffersonian-Jacksonian ideals of widespread control over property as the foundation of democracy. That would be a middle-class strategy worth pursuing. ◀



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InTHESETIMES

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LETTERS

Off track

For the first time since I started reading *In These Times* a year ago, I have a serious conflict with your position on an issue (David Moberg's "Late to the station," *ITT*, June 14).

Moberg says, "The energy advantage of trains yields an environmental reward, despite the pollution and radiation waste disposal problems of [here he left out the word "nuclear"] power plants for electrified trains." He also fails to report adequately on the electromagnetic radiation generated by maglev trains, saying only that with one model (I never could for sure tell which one) "there are problems with greater electromagnetic radiation." Of all the environmental hazards the world faces today, I see none worse than ionizing radiation, and see no reason to add to the hazard.

Worldwatch Institute estimates the worldwide volume of high-level waste at more than 80,000 tons. In 1990, the world's 413 commercial reactors pro-

duced 9,500 tons. And that's not counting the tens of thousands of tons from weapons programs and medical and industrial uses. This is radioactive waste nobody knows what to do with. In 1989, U.S. reactors also produced 67 times the plutonium it would take to give everyone on Earth lung cancer. And plutonium is forever.

People may be inclined to think radiation labeled "low-level" may not be very dangerous. In fact, the government was considering relabeling some types of low-level radiation as "below regulatory concern." This waste could then be disposed of as ordinary waste, without even any recordkeeping. It turns out that low-level radiation is not that benign.

Abram Petkau is an associate professor in the Department of Radiology of the University of Manitoba and the author of 92 papers in the field of radiation biology. In 1972, Petkau (then a scientist at the Canadian Atomic Energy Commission's Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment in Manitoba) made an accidental discovery. When Petkau irra-

diated phospholipid membranes (an artificial membrane similar to living cells) under water, he discovered that if the irradiation continued over an extended period, the membranes would tear after absorbing a much lower amount of radiation than if the total dose were emitted in short, strong bursts over a short period.

Repeating the experiment numerous times, Petkau always reached the same conclusions: the more drawn-out the radiation exposure, the lower the total dose required to break the membrane. This showed that small, chronic radiation doses could have a much more damaging effect than high, short-term doses.

According to the "Petkau effect," small extended radiation doses such as those from atomic test fallout or the emissions of nuclear plants would be 100 to 1,000 times more dangerous than the radiation experienced by atom-bomb survivors in Japan.

The concept of maglev travel may be sleek and futuristic, but environmentally it is something of a throwback, owing to the vast amounts of energy required to, quite literally, keep the trains afloat. Dan McNamara, president of the Train Riders Association of California, contends that construction costs for maglev are "out of this world," while power usage will be "phenomenal." An experimental maglev system built in Japan using superconductivity technology will work only when the tracks are refrigerated to 270 degrees F. below zero, McNamara points

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



out. The magnetic fields produced by this system, McNamara adds, are strong enough to destroy heart-regulating pacemakers inside the passenger compartments.

While maglev technology has been tested in Europe for more than 20 years, it has never been placed in commercial operation. As one German engineer joked, "Maglev? Oh, that is only for export."

It would seem prudent to wait until a maglev system is performing satisfactorily somewhere. We should adopt a wait-and-see posture. High-speed, steel-rail trains that have been proven in both France and Japan seem the better choice.

Karl I. Hennum
Seattle

Slow down!

Concerning David Moberg's article on high-speed rail (*ITT*, June 14), the question is not which high-speed rail, nor even when, but why? Why is it necessary for trains to go as fast as 300 miles an hour? As if our present frenzy of violent acceleration were not causing enough psychological, social and environmental destruction, we need to go even faster?

Moberg praises the French, German and Japanese. But who wants to emulate the Japanese, a people whose government is apparently seriously considering building a four-story parking garage halfway up the slopes of the sacred Mt. Fuji?

Of course, the bottom line is money. As Lewis Mumford wrote, "'Haste makes waste' was changed by the technologists to 'Haste and waste makes money.'"

Our leaders are always bemoaning violence and yet they are the very ones who are always promoting the latest, fastest means of communication and transportation. Speed is violence; high speed is high violence.

Which brings us to the matter of safety. Technophiles for high-speed rail love to point out the safety record—so far. Engineers don't like to hear this, but even the products of engineers and

scientists are designed and run by—guess what—humans. Fallible humans. There may not have been any accidents yet, but there will be.

The type of rail, by the way, we need in order to achieve many of the desirable effects Moberg sets forth in his article is not high-speed rail, but light rail. Replacing much of our highway traffic with light rail would prove greatly beneficial in terms of environment, safety, practicality and expense.

Moberg mentions the great expense involved in acquiring right-of-way for high-speed rail. What he should also have mentioned is that this is so because high-speed rail requires a straight rail, and that means (violently) pushing through whatever is in your way: mountains, high-rises, residential neighborhoods, stadia, factories, river gorges, 400-year-old trees, historical properties, you name it. Expensive, but to technophiles, worth it. Light rail, incidentally, can accommodate itself to the environment, man-made and natural.

Humanity doesn't need to go faster; we are already enough out of sync. Quite aside from our being totally out of time with the rhythms of the natural world, upon which we are ultimately dependent, we are also totally out of sync with ourselves. We are not stressing just the environment but ourselves as well. Witness the psychological and social damage clearly visible on every hand; the skyrocketing health problems. You can't smell the roses at 300 miles an hour. You can't even see them.

Ted Flickinger
Claysville, Pa.

Maglev misgivings

In his piece on rail transport (*ITT*, June 14), David Moberg seems to have been partially blinded by the propaganda of maglev promoters. The article is shot through with error and misconception, not to mention a point of view that assumes faster is better.

I'll just point out a few problems. First of all, electrified trains do rely on oil ... and coal and nuclear and hydro,

etc. They are on the grid, which means they use power generated from all kinds of sources. To just shrug off the possible negative impacts of increased reliance on centralized sources such as nuclear is irresponsible. His reference to the wonderful potential of solar and wind power is an empty hope for these trains. I'm not sure where he got his energy efficiency data for maglev, but estimates by the Japanese show that maglev will require three times the energy per passenger mile that steel-wheel bullet trains use. Moberg also fails to mention the additional problems related to development and land speculation that accompany the construction of new train lines. In Japan, residents all along the route of a planned experimental track are opposed to the project and are fighting the project as best they can. Like new highways and airports, new train lines are not popular with anybody but the big money interests.

Elsewhere, Moberg mentions how Japan's and Europe's train systems give them a competitive edge, but he conveniently ignores certain geographic contrasts between these densely settled areas and the sprawl of North America. He seems to think that the trains caused the density, but I imagine it's the other way around. Further, in Japan at least, more freight is carried by ship or truck than by rail.

Finally, do we really need to get anywhere an hour sooner? Is "lost" time really lost if you read a book, do some work or even sleep while being delayed somewhere? And as for the techno-futurists: isn't the computer age supposed to free us from the necessity to travel? If long-distance travel becomes increasingly leisure-oriented, what's the hurry?

George Crane
Nagoya, Japan

David Moberg replies: Judgments about high-speed trains need to be made in context: if people (or goods) are not riding by train, they will be traveling mainly by car, airplane or truck. Electronic ties among people in

an increasingly computerized world may reduce some travel, but just as computers didn't produce a paperless office and telephones have coexisted with increased travel demands, travel and transportation needs are not likely to decrease substantially.

Also, the current transportation system is already overloaded, contributing to its inefficiency. The most pressing transportation need is for more efficient and attractive mass transit in metropolitan areas, but there is a strong need for improved interurban transportation as well. In many cases, infrastructure for the two can be developed simultaneously.

Trains certainly pose problems, such as pollution or nuclear waste from central power plants as well as environmental and social disruption from construction. Yet the environmental and social costs are likely to be lower than would be the case with more cars, trucks, planes, highways and airports, which generate more pollution per passenger mile and eat up more space than trains do. That's really the choice.

Do we need to go faster? I like to hike and smell the roses, too, but there's a time for speed and a time for dallying. Within the world of business, time does equal money, and transportation efficiency contributes to economic growth. Efficiency in use of time and economic growth are not my ultimate values, but they need not be enemies of the good life and a just society.

I doubt if Flickinger wants to bring back the stagecoach or covered wagon as the primary form of transcontinental travel. Yet it is true that there are always legitimate questions about balancing speed with other costs: the proposed new supersonic jet transports fail that test, and it may be that maglev will as well.

If high-speed trains are not developed, people will not slow down but fly instead. I wonder how Flickinger rationalizes his maxim that "high speed is high violence" with statistics on transportation deaths and injuries, say, of autos compared with

high-speed trains.

Maglev is still experimental, so the claims of proponents as well as the alarms of opponents about costs and energy usage need to be taken with grains of salt. But the German model using conventional but powerful magnets may soon be commercially deployed.

Electromagnetic radiation problems are greater with the Japanese trains using superconducting magnets. (And Hennum should note that it's those magnets, not the tracks, that have to be cooled to very low temperatures, although higher-temperature superconductivity magnets may be developed.)

Maglev research so far justifies further investigation and testing. The federal government should also support development of new steel-wheel technology. We should not wait for other countries to expand their technological edge.

In the meantime, as I argued, it makes sense for the United States to improve existing tracks to use some form of Sweden's moderately high-speed, tilt-train technology. We should try various high-speed, steel-wheel technologies (French or German, for example) on new track in appropriate transportation corridors, such as those where land-acquisition costs would be low or demand is very high.

The federal government should also support more forms of mass transit, including light rail, in urban areas. Our reliance on highways and cars has fostered an urban sprawl that has been socially and environmentally destructive. More emphasis on rail could help reverse that trend, but we'll have to develop a transportation system appropriate for this country, not expect a wholesale transplant of technologies (or political systems) from elsewhere.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



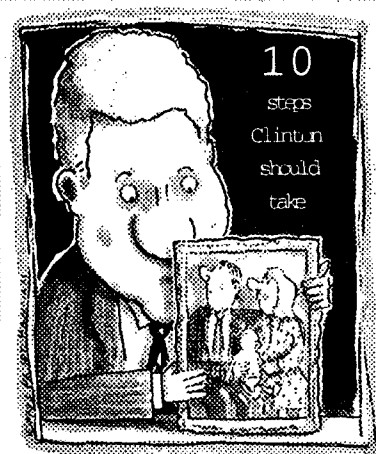
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The alternative news magazine

"Who wants to ride a through train if it's a through train to hell?"
PAGE 26

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FAMILIES VALUED

10 steps Clinton should take

David Moberg reports

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IN SHORT



Eleanor Mill

Haitian President
Jean-Bertrand
Aristide

BACKING THE BAD GUYS

For Haiti to succeed, the U.S. must change its policies

country, the United States must also reverse its own policies toward Haiti.

The U.S. strategy, implemented by the Agency for International Development (AID) for more than a decade, has proven a disastrous failure for the Haitian people. But it has been a gold mine for a handful of American businesses and the corrupt Haitian elite, according to a recent report from the National Labor Committee Education Fund in Support of Worker and Human Rights in Central America, a group sponsored by 23 U.S. unions.

During the '80s—when Haiti was led by dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier and later by a military government—AID gave the Haitian private sector \$100

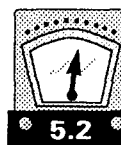
Ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide may soon be reinstated, following successful negotiations with military coup commander Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras. Yet for an Aristide government to democratize and develop the impoverished



By Woody Igou

Ouch, plank splinters

A recent Young Republican national convention voted to adjourn without adopting a



5.2

new platform, primarily due to fears of division over the abortion issue. Instead, they adopted a

platform identical to the one adopted by the national GOP in 1988.

"Murder" vs. votes = run away.

Culture crisis

Actor Bruce Willis, babbling on the E Channel, recently stated



2.7

that "London is the cultural capital of the world. It deserved to have a Planet Hollywood." (Of

which he is part owner.)

Just like they deserved Hudson Hawk.

Ethnic trophy hunting

The *New York Times* reports that a new status symbol in Chinese



5.1

restaurants and to the businessmen who frequent them is to have hired Russian women hug

the Chinese patrons, light their cigarettes and pour them liquor. The practice lends an

exotic flair to dining, and also gives the Chinese an acute sense of superiority over their former Russian Big Brother.

"Hi, I'm Sophia, a former nuclear physicist. How about a hug and a light?"

Post-industrial schizo

In Japan a new best-seller, *The Concept of Honest Recovery*, has sold 600,000 copies and has started a



movement away from Japan's recent materialism. Modesty and cultural nation-

alism are now on the rise.

However, a Japanese advertising firm reports that the latest craze is pet fortune-telling, in which the owner pays a handsome sum to obtain his or her pet's future through psychic readings. *Just keep that up and you won't need the book.*

Chip-trash

After eight years of programming, Scott French has taught his computer, "Hal," to write a novel.



The book, *Just This Once*, published last week, was programmed

to be written in the style of Jacqueline Susann, the glitzy romance writer best known for *Valley of the Dolls*.

One step forward, two steps back.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Et tu, Pol Pot?
10. Horseperson of the Apocalypse

million, reported National Labor Committee director Charles Kernaghan, who wrote the report. Although the volume of exports rose, Haitians gained little income, since they were paid so miserably. Real wages declined by 56 percent from 1983 to 1991 (and modest earlier health and benefit payments were largely eliminated).

AID urged this low-wage strategy on Haiti and encouraged American manufacturers to relocate to Haiti, Kernaghan reported. Then, when democratically elected Aristide—who took office in February 1991 only to be ousted by the military eight months later—tried to raise the minimum wage from 22 U.S. cents an hour to 37 cents an hour, AID "opposed this increase and orchestrated opposition to it," Kernaghan added.

Although even a doubling of the Aristide-proposed minimum wage would have left Haitian wages below those of other Caribbean countries, AID warned that the "high distortion in labor costs" that would result from raising the minimum wage would undermine Haiti's low-wage development. In its internal reports, AID argued for a return to the investment climate that prevailed during the military regime after the 1986 fall of the Duvalier dictatorship.

AID commissioned a poll of business leaders, who were unsurprisingly hostile to a raised minimum wage. Then the agency allocated \$26.7 million for a fight against the minimum wage and other Aristide policies. The money went to an "ad hoc committee of business organizations" working under the umbrella of AID's export and investment promotion project, according to an AID report. The aim of the campaign was to keep "Haitian production competitive in world markets."

The man whom AID chose to head an export-promotion group, Prominex, was Andre Apaid, a wealthy Haitian businessman whose company supplies Sperry/Unisys, IBM, Remington and Honeywell. Apaid told a large post-coup Miami gathering in December 1991 that if Aristide returned to Haiti "I'd strangle him."

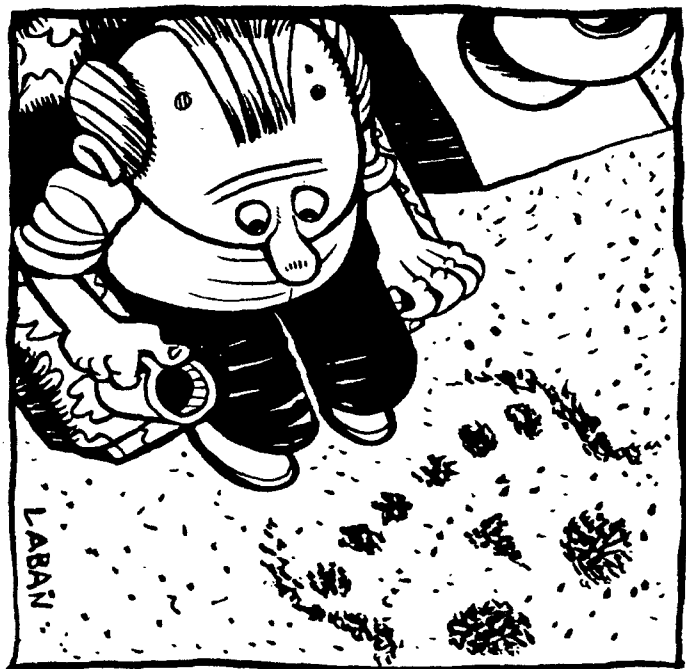
Apaid was also among petitioners who got former President Bush to lift the embargo on Haitian exports in early 1992 and has been a lobbyist for the military government. AID's prime allies—whose opposition to Aristide policies was financed by the U.S. government—thus included leading supporters of the military coup.

In the aftermath of the September 1991 coup, the weak Haitian labor unions and peasant groups were virtually eliminated. Wages plummeted even further. The National Labor Committee found workers earning as little as 14 cents an hour at an apparel firm owned by a wealthy Haitian family that exports to a United States contractor.

Haiti may be an extreme case, but it is an example of the thinking that laid behind the development of Ronald Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative and, subsequently, the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico. Yet as Haiti shows, the low-wage strategy may lure U.S. investment and spur exports, but it is unlikely to improve living standards. It also sets the United States up to act as a supporter of anti-democratic elites who profit from that low-wage strategy.

After the National Labor Committee issued its report, the AID director, J. Bryant Atwood, requested a meeting with the committee and the presidents of member unions. That meeting has yet to take place—but if Clinton really wants to support Aristide and Haitian democracy, he must turn AID on a course that is virtually the reverse of what it pursued under Reagan and Bush.

—David Moberg



DEEP PILE OF TROUBLE

New report shows your carpet may be killing you

headaches, nausea and rashes. These are just some of the possible adverse health effects associated with the toxic chemicals emitted by new carpeting and its padding and adhesives.

If that factory-fresh showroom smell had you worried, you may have been on to something. According to a recent report issued by the attorneys general of New York, Vermont, Connecticut and Oregon, carpeting contains and emits a host of unhealthy and unpronounceable chemicals, including benzene, formaldehyde, toluene, diisocyanate, xylene, styrene and 4-phenylcyclohexene (4-PC)—some of which are known or probable human carcinogens. The report recounts one scientific study where mice were exposed to air passed over carpets: "These mice showed severe health problems, including neurological and respiratory effects. In some cases, the mice died."

The report, entitled "Carpets and Indoor Air: What You Should Know," warns consumers not to be bamboozled into a false sense of security by carpet retailers displaying the Green Seal—which, the report contends, "misleads the public by implying that carpets bearing the tag will have no adverse impact on the quality of the air." The Carpet and Rug Institute, a trade association of the carpet industry, apparently cooked up its own questionable safety-testing scheme, setting its own standards for acceptable chemical emissions—although, as the report states, "there are no generally recognized standards of safety for indoor air quality." The report concludes that, despite the industry's attempts to sweep the problems under the rug, the Green Seal offers no assurances against a carpet's potential toxicity.

—Aushra Abouzeid

So now your house is lead-free, asbestos-free and radon-free. Just when you thought it was safe to unwind in the living room again, you and your family begin to experience respiratory difficulties, burning eyes, nose and throat,

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

The more things change...

In this post-Cosby world, one might expect television to be better than it used to be at going beyond the stereotype and the cheap shot. Not necessarily, according to a study commissioned by two entertainment industry performers' unions, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Screen Actors Guild.

The silent but happily clapping Vanna White is, it seems, a role model for TV's gender relations. And minorities are mostly still neither seen nor heard. In TV's America today, just as it was 10 years ago, older women are witches, children's programming is short on parents, and old people are nowhere to be found. Given the nearly 20,000 speaking parts analyzed by the study, and the reputation of the research team led by veteran scholar George Gerbner at the University of Pennsylvania, the industry is left to respond with familiar arguments: art is not life; it's not brain surgery, it's just entertainment.

Gerbner, who has dedicated his life to the analysis of the social effects of the mass media, has long and persuasively argued that there is a "cultivation" effect, in which general attitudes are cultivated by ever-present images and absences in media. He is now spearheading what he calls the Cultural Environmental Movement, a loosely

structured network of people concerned about the relationship between the quality of media and the quality of life. (For more information, write Prof. Gerbner at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6220.)

The money in public TV

Public TV is trying, despite its perennial genteel poverty, to take a hint from commercial TV in its search for better ratings. Unable to afford high-ticket prime-time programming, PBS has bought rights to air an NBC leftover, the series *I'll Fly Away*, set in the South during the civil rights era. Other major PBS programs have level or reduced funding levels for the coming year.

Meanwhile, some public TV producers do very well by doing good. Take Lancit Media, which *Broadcasting and Cable* reports is doing very well on Wall Street producing children's programs that need taxpayer and foundation backing. Why? Because there's so much money in the spin-offs—toys, software, games. After all, another fave kids show on PBS, *Shining Time Station*, made \$175 million in wholesale toy sales alone. And all the licensing money goes directly to Lancit; PBS doesn't take a penny.

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GETTING DUMPED ON

Hospitals continue illegal transfers of indigent patients

quotient"? *U.S. News* apparently failed to notice that four of the outstanding hospitals on their lists have also been cited by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for violation of the 1986 Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, which prohibits the practice of "patient dumping"—transferring patients in unstable condition to other hospitals, due to their inability to pay.

According to a new report by Public Citizen's Health Research group, "patient dumping" continues to be a problem across the country, despite the seven-year-old law. The report lists 302 patient-dumping violations identified by HHS in 268 different hospitals.

Four facilities—the Oschner Foundation Hospital in New Orleans, New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago and the University of Chicago Hospitals—received both the *U.S. News* mark of excellence and the HHS stamp of shame. And only the University of Chicago Hospitals, with repeated violations, were fined. Nationally, only 9 percent of the offending hospitals have ever been penalized, while the remainder, including 23 hospitals with repeated violations, have never faced legal consequences.

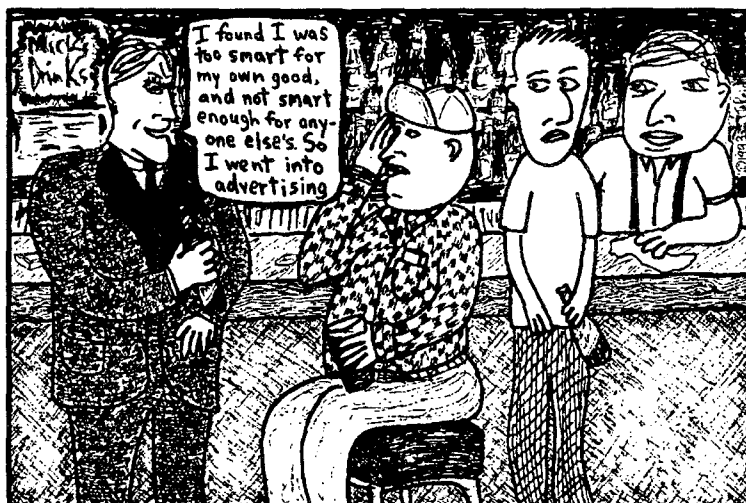
In addition, the consumer group's report found that the government has cooperated with hospitals' attempts to shield themselves from negative publicity about their patient-dumping practices. In 10 of the 17 cases in which hospitals were fined, the settlement included a secrecy clause in which HHS agreed not to publicize the case.

Due to irregular reporting, investigation and penalization of patient-dumping offenses, the 302 incidents in Public Citizen's report "represent only the smallest tip of a large and dangerous iceberg," the report says. But the study warns that even with improved enforcement, patient dumping "will not be eliminated as long as medical costs continue to rise, and 37 million people in this country remain unprotected by any form of health insurance." —Aushra Abouzeid

U.S. News & World Report ranked "America's Best Hospitals" in a recent issue according to categories such as "reputational score," "mortality rate" and "service mix." But what about their "dumping

ROUGH CUTS

JA REID



IN PERSON



THE NETWORKER

Andrew Tyndall studies
the nightly news

For six years Andrew Tyndall has had the endurance to watch every weeknight installment of CBS *Evening News*, ABC *World News Tonight* and NBC *Nightly News*.

He doesn't just watch the news, though, he takes it apart—timing each story, labeling it and feeding it into an ever-growing database. Enhanced by Tyndall's interpretations, this database is the foundation of his bimonthly newsletter, the *Tyndall Report*, and its shorter offshoot, the *Tyndall Weekly*. British-born, but a New Yorker for nearly 20 years, Tyndall launched his project in 1987 with money borrowed from his girlfriend. He runs it, solo, from his Lower East Side apartment.

In the *Tyndall Report* he scrutinizes one of America's most important institutions—network news—with the quirky absorption of a stamp collector or vintage-car buff. Despite the proliferation of alternative news sources, the three major networks remain the major national news organs, Tyndall argues. Of those who switch on their televisions during the news hour any given weeknight, about 60 percent tune in to ABC, CBS or NBC.

Those who want a radical critique of the network news will not get it from Tyndall. He judges television journalism largely on its own terms. "There's a difference between what's newsworthy and what's important," says Tyndall. "That's fine. Because people know when they're watching news that it's news they're watching—they're not watching a civics lesson. They're watching something that's interesting, that will catch their eye, that will provide a talking point over dinner—things that news does apart from educate the populace."

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Worked over

The United States is a nation of "haves" and "have-nots," despite popular conceptions of a dominant middle class. Nowhere is the division clearer than in the area of health insurance.

A nationwide study by a University of Florida sociologist shows that nearly half of the working poor in this country receive no health insurance at all. And only 29 percent of workers with incomes below the poverty line get health insurance from their employers, compared to 69 percent of the non-poor.

"The working poor cannot depend upon employers to provide them with health insurance, despite our nation's policy of relying upon employers to furnish it," says sociologist Karen Seccombe. "These are people who play by the 'rules' of society in that they have jobs, yet they still fall through the cracks."

Seccombe studied the health insurance backgrounds of 12,231 American workers between the ages of 18 and 64. She points out that few of the working poor belong to unions—the single most important factor in determining whether they are provided with health insurance.

Paid off

The working poor shouldn't count on their members of Congress to help with their health insurance troubles. Poor people don't bankroll campaigns. By contrast, health care industry lobbyists pumped \$25.7 million into congressional campaigns in 1991-1992, according to a Gannett News Service com-

puter analysis. The largest amounts went to party leaders and key members of committees handling health reform legislation.

Rad Journalism

Which man would you label "radical"?

☐ A priest who is elected president of his country in free and fair elections, and then attempts to enact reforms that will help the vast majority of his constituents.

☐ A military general who forces a democratically elected president from office, ignores international demands that he return power and kills hundreds of his own people. If you checked the second box, you probably don't work in the mainstream U.S. media. In several recent accounts of the situation in Haiti, ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide gets the "radical" tag, while coup leader Raoul Cedras is introduced only by his dignified military title, "Lt. Gen."

A July 6 *Wall Street Journal* story, for example, describes Aristide as "volatile and at times radical" whose "primary backers [are] the country's poor and dispossessed." And an Associated Press wire story, published in the *Chicago Sun-Times* on June 17, describes Aristide as "a radical Roman Catholic priest popular among the poor."

Neither story mentions that 85 percent of the Haitian people earn less \$150 dollars per year—so the "poor and dispossessed" hardly constitute a fringe constituency.

Aristide is clearly not a "radical" in the eyes of the average Haitian—or, for the matter, of the average American. So whose interests is the press looking out for?

This is not to say Tyndall is uncritical of the networks. His refusal to dismiss the network news as simply "bad" lends credibility to Tyndall's intricate, blow-by-blow commentary on what the networks are doing and how well they're doing it. He points out when they fail at their own game or when their coverage is thin, blundering or "faddish." Tyndall cites the war on drugs as an example of the latter.

"Either they completely over-covered it when the drug hysteria was going on and now they're covering it appropriately, or they spotted a serious social problem and then they just got bored with it," he says.

He notices when they miss a big story or ignore a topic that's important to Americans. Religion has long been a network blind spot, says Tyndall. This, he believes, is one reason they botched coverage of the Waco siege, telling the story from the FBI's point of view.

Content to let others assess soundbites for bias or "spin," Tyndall concentrates on the networks' "nuts and bolts" decisions about which stories deserve the most attention. He observes the waxing and waning of their interest in an issue and draws conclusions about the events that drive these cycles. George Bush's first speech in office, for example, effected a far more dramatic surge in the networks' coverage of drugs than Clinton's first speech did for the economy. "[Bush] was able to change the networks' news agenda by increasing the overall coverage of his issue," says Tyndall.

Like Tyndall himself—who politely serves a visitor tea in an apartment painted salmon and chartreuse—his newsletter is at once dignified and chatty. It depicts network news reporters as characters in dialogue, alighting on their moments of insight and clarity and, more surprisingly, on the funny things they say. CBS' Dan Rather on Hurricane Andrew: "Toys R Us has become Toys Were Us." To Tyndall, the networks also have personalities, and he remarks on them like a parent on his children's latest phases. "NBC is now covering crime very heavily indeed," he says, "and they don't have any thought about what the solution is." Or: "ABC has taken [Bosnia] a lot more seriously for a year now. If you wanted to characterize that you would say that ABC is being a hawk."

If you have not read the *Tyndall Report* or *Tyndall Weekly*, you're not alone. At \$60 a year, the newsletters' subscribers number only in the hundreds. They are mostly insiders—network people, print reporters or special-interest groups who take a professional interest in what the networks do. Steve Friedman, who recently joined the *Today Show* after nearly three years as executive producer of *NBC Nightly News*, remarks, "You agree with him when he says CBS is tabloid and populist. You agree with him when he says NBC's Washington coverage is the best. You don't agree with him when he says that your Bosnia coverage sucks." As for Tyndall's numbers, Friedman says, "those are gospel."

Tyndall has made it his full-time job to study the behavior of an institution that in turns seeks to monitor the pulse of a vast and diverse nation. He sees the networks as a unifying, "defiantly centrist" voice amid disparate ideologies.

With so many watching, these judgments are events in themselves. Hence the elliptical subtitle of the *Tyndall Report*: "Because the news is what the networks report ... and what the networks report is news."

—Katharine Greider

For more information, write ADT Research, 135 Rivington St., New York, NY 10002.

E C O N O M I C S

The center cannot hold

Everyone claims to speak for the middle class, but many of its members are at odds.

By Nancy Folbre

Politics in this country is a struggle for the soul of the middle class, or so the Democrats would have us believe. But what on earth is the middle class? Who's in it; who's not; where do we draw the lines? According to political analysts (both left and right), the middle class, basically, is where you want to be: enjoying the good life, but not at anyone's expense. If you're rich, you may not really deserve it; but if you're middle class, you've earned it. Diligent and virtuous, the middle class is the homogeneous, almost unanimous embodiment of the Common Person. Everyone claims to speak for it—Bill Clinton loudest of all. He accepted the Democratic nomination “in the name of all the people who do the work, pay the taxes, raise the kids and

play by the rules—in the name of the hard-working Americans who make up our forgotten middle class.”

Of course, no one has forgotten it, or forgotten its crucial function as social anchor, stabilizer, buffer between rich and poor. Almost a hundred years ago, Edward Bernstein insisted to his fellow Marxists that the growth of a German middle class was defusing class conflict. Since then, the Middle has become the metaphorical embodiment of compromise, consensus and the End of Ideology. When the prosperity of the middle class is threatened, then we expect class resentments to heat up, and we look for little wisps of smoke.

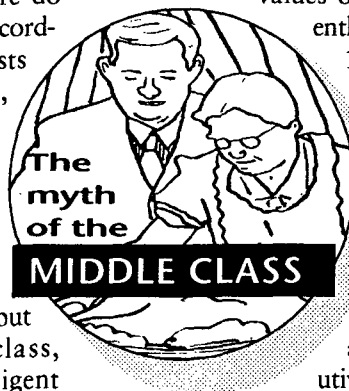
Liberal and left-wing economists have been manning the fire-towers, focusing their binoculars on new evidence of increased income inequality. Robert Kuttner proclaimed long ago that a shrinking middle class demands a call to political action. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison have pointed to the loss of the well-paying manufacturing jobs that once made it possible for union workers to enjoy the good life.

Ironically, however, it is Republican analyst Kevin Phillips who has issued the most urgent warnings, in *The Politics of Rich and Poor* and, more recently, *Boiling Point: Democrats, Republicans, and the Decline of Middle-Class Prosperity*. (See review, page 32.) As a blurb on the latter book's jacket explains, Phillips defends “the interests and values of Middle Americans with the same enthusiasm Marx mustered on behalf of 19th-century industrial workers.”

Phillips' rhetoric had an important impact on the Clinton campaign, and he is one of the few pundits to have given consistent support to the president's budget plan. Yet Phillips offers no explanation of why Republicans have proved so uninterested in his advice, or why support for redistributive policies remains so slim.

Conservatives are by no means apologetic. They criticize the “politics of class envy” and assert that the middle class still has much to gain from an alliance with the rich. The *Wall Street Journal* sarcastically subtitles its editorials on Democratic policies “The Class Warfare Economy” and illustrated one piece with a picture of a guillotine. The reasoning behind the rhetoric is straightforward: “Soak the rich” means the middle class gets wet.

Nor is this view confined to highbrow journals of corporate opinion. Rush Limbaugh dominates talk radio and reaches the best-seller list by ridiculing liberals. His ham-



handed humor flavors what seems to be an appealing class analysis: "The middle class, coupled with the rich, make this country work. Now, what's slowing this country down? What is the equivalent of putting the oars in the water and just dragging them along? ... the poor. The poor and the lower classes of this country have gotten a free ride since the Great Depression, when it became noble to be poor."

Of course, this isn't class analysis in the traditional Marxian sense; it has nothing to do with relations between capitalists and workers. But the modern welfare state promotes a more complex form of distributional conflict precisely because it redistributes such a large share of social surplus through taxation. The total value of federal, state and local tax revenues in the U.S. is more than five times the amount of corporate profits before taxes.

Because the tax code is so complex—and so laced with loopholes—it's very difficult to calculate exactly who bears the brunt of which taxes and who enjoys the benefits of the many different kinds of public spending. Most people probably have a hard time figuring out where their interests lie. Perhaps, as a result, they become more susceptible to demagoguery—though the demagogues themselves probably don't understand just what's going on.

Has the middle class been helped or hurt by recent economic trends? The answer depends on which part you look at, and how you define your terms.

The left, no less susceptible than any other group to majoritarian desires, wants to believe (and wants us to believe) that Republican policies hurt all but the very rich. But statistics that show that the richest one percent of the population were the only ones who made out like bandits in the '80s are misleading. In fact, enough goodies probably trickled down to the top 40 percent of the population to reward allegiance to conservative economic policies.

This is not to say that middle-income groups have not experienced a serious squeeze. The percentage of total household income received by the middle 60 percent declined from about 53 percent in 1970 to about 49 percent in 1990, while the share of the top 20 percent increased



from 43 percent to 47 percent. Those within the top one percent were the greatest beneficiaries, especially when wealth as well as income is taken into consideration.

But it's not quite accurate to conclude, as Phillips does, that "[t]he wider the gates of opportunity opened for the top 1 percent of Americans, the more they seemed to shut for the average household." The average conceals a good deal of variation; the gates were half-open for many. The top 40 percent of all households enjoyed increases in mean income of about 15 percent from 1980 to 1990, more than twice the increase of the bottom 60 percent.

More importantly, conventional measures understate the relative well-being of the "upper middle," the 20 percent of the population just below the top quintile, with an average household income of about \$45,000. Households in this category are likely to include wage earners who enjoy sub-

stantial health and pension benefits, the value of which is not included in the measures of their income. They are likely to own, or to anticipate inheriting, substantial wealth in the form of real estate. They are much less likely than those in the bottom 60 percent to support dependents such as young children. All but a very small percentage of these households are headed by white men.

In his classic book *The Making of the English Working Class*, E.P. Thompson argues that class is framed by the way people think about themselves, not merely by their location in economic space. In the United States and elsewhere, the upper middle class tends to look up, not down, despite the steep slope of income and wealth that separates them from the rich. College-educated professionals and managers can indulge in haute cuisine and exotic vacations, even though they lack for leisure time. Even the "middle-middle," the 20 percent of Americans squarely in between the bottom and top 40 percent, seem reluctant, or perhaps just afraid, to ask what they have in common with those below.

Yes, middle-class standards of living have declined, especially for the young. But just because the rich have fared much better doesn't mean that it's their fault. In fact, increased international competition takes much of the blame for economic stagnation in Europe as well as in the United States. Conservatives argue, quite effectively, that generous social welfare policies and high wages are now luxuries the West can ill afford.

But what about the other luxuries, the ones the rich increasingly enjoy? By most estimates, the budget could be balanced by simply restoring the structure of progressive income tax rates in place before the Reagan Revolution. Clinton's proposals fall far short, raising the top rate to a maximum of 40 percent (including the "surcharge" on millionaires), compared to the 70 percent in effect in 1980. Nor has Clinton even raised the issue of increased inheritance taxes, which could target unearned wealth. Clearly, he is afraid of losing what middle-class support he still enjoys.

How can we hope to unravel the mystery of middle-class conservatism? Perhaps the most important clues are those

that most detectives (especially those in the Marxian tradition) have overlooked—factors that can't be reduced to brackets based on ownership or income. Class is a limited predictor of political opinions in large part because race, gender and age define collective economic interests, not just "attitudes," "social identities" or "values."

Economic interests can't be reduced to how much income someone enjoys at some particular point in time, because they include perceived opportunities, liabilities and promises of future transfers. In the current U.S. economy, these are determined as much by race, gender and age as by class. First, because laws against discrimination and in favor of affirmative action have a small but significant influence on access to education and jobs. Second, because government spending redistributes money along lines more visibly related to race, gender and age than class.

A common complaint about affirmative action is that it benefits individuals prosperous enough to take advantage of educational opportunities and move into professional-managerial jobs, but does little for the poor. It creates female yuppies and promotes the black middle class, but ignores welfare mothers.

The more politically powerful, though seldom openly expressed, complaint is that it infringes on the opportunities of whites and men within the middle class. Just how great is this infringement? Of course, it's difficult to measure, but in a period of economic stagnation when there aren't enough good jobs to go around, it does make a difference.

Even more threatening than affirmative action, at least to white men, are other, broader demands for pay equity and reparations to remedy the legacy of racial oppression. The sums of money at stake are probably too large to be paid for only by the upper class. To illustrate, consider two completely hypothetical questions: How much money would you need to take away from full-time male workers in order to bring the wages of full-time women workers up to their level, assuming no increase in average wages? About 15 percent of men's earnings. How much money would you need to take away from white households in order to bring the income of black and Hispanic households up to their level, assuming no increase in average income? About 7 percent of their income. In both cases, the total sum of money involved is substantially greater than the value of corporate profits after taxes.

The economic interests at stake help explain why the term "affirmative action" has virtually disappeared from



public debate, replaced by the pejorative (and non-synonymous) "reverse discrimination." They also help explain why conservatives and neo-liberals choose to deny the importance, even the existence, of racial inequality. A recent editorial in *The New Republic* attacked Clinton nominee Lani Guinier as a "firm believer in the racial analysis of an irreducible, racial 'us' and 'them' in American society." The popular press went even further, calling Guinier a "quota queen."

Conservatives explicitly appeal to race and gender interests to broaden what might otherwise be a too-narrow class constituency. Rush Limbaugh's favorite theme is quotas. When George Bush signed the Civil Rights Act of 1991, he outraged the Republican right wing; and while Pat Buchanan was too overt a racist to win sufficient support, he helped create the space in which Ross Perot's campaign could thrive, especially among white suburbanites.

And as Perot's success demonstrates, the white middle class is not really opposed to higher taxes, as long as those taxes are used to pay off their own debt. They put up with a significant increase in Social Security taxes in the '80s because they realized that it was necessary to finance their own retirement. What most (though not all) are opposed to are taxes that redistribute money away from their own families, taxes that finance assistance to other people's children (public assistance to the poor, publicly supported child care, increased spending on public schools, free immunization).

Democratic theorists have a piecemeal understanding of this problem. Thomas Edsall has long emphasized the importance of racial divisions to party politics, citing numerous surveys as well as election results that show that Democrats are perceived as caring more about the welfare of blacks than whites. Pollsters have also traced the gender gap. In early 1992, the Democrats had the advantage among women (by 4 percentage points), the disadvantage among men (by 7 percentage points).

Age also plays an enormously important role. The gender gap is greatest among voters ages 18-29. In 1992, 40 percent of women in this group identified themselves as Democrats, 33 percent as Republicans. Among men in the same group, priorities were almost exactly reversed: 41 percent identified themselves as Republicans, 31 percent as Democrats. This pattern is consistent with widespread awareness of the gender impact of affirmative action and other policies, such as those that make it easier to combine work and family responsibilities and increase women's ability to compete with men (without becoming entirely like them).

Interests based on race, gender and age interlock in complicated ways. The elderly population, which wields significant electoral power, includes a smaller percentage of people of color than the population under age 18. Whites are much less likely than people of color to live in households with young children. A growing percentage of families are maintained by women alone. Older white males have less to gain from supporting public expenditures on children than they once did, because their own

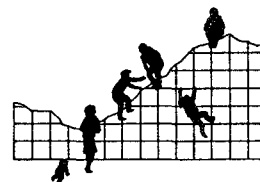
families are less likely to benefit.

None of these patterns suggest that class is unimportant, but they do show that the "politics of rich and poor" is inadequate. Instead of focusing on the class structure we should study the CRAG (class, race, age, gender) structure. Among the very rich and very poor, class consciousness may prevail; but within the middle class, the interplay of interests is more complex.

What are the implications for political strategy? Most obviously, that neither Democrats nor any new progressive party can hope to win the middle class as a whole without betraying their larger cause. The middle class is not, as Kevin Phillips would have us believe, a repository of civic virtue but is rather an amalgam of groups pursuing their own self-interest, often at the expense of others.

Progressive coalitions must be built with the understanding that no one dimension of collective identity supersedes all others. Some of the affluent have race or gender interests in common with the poor; some older white men share class interests with young women of color. They could be brought together by some basic principles of economic justice and fair play. The Democrats should stop struggling over the soul of the so-called middle class and start minding the soul of social democracy.

Nancy Folbre is a professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and works with the Center for Popular Economics. Her book, *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint*, is forthcoming from Routledge.



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IDEOLOGY

Stuck in the middle with you

If American mythology has made too much of the middle class, the left has made too little of it.

By David Futrelle

It has been the peculiar genius of middle-class ideology to deny not only that it is an ideology, but that there are even such things as classes. America, we often hear, is a land of equality—or at least a land of opportunity. No one is trapped by his or her circumstances, and anyone can make it to the top. This belief, though it's never been borne out by the facts, has a tenacious hold on the American imagination, and despite the passing of Horatio Alger it remains prevalent today. Americans, historian Louis Hartz once suggested, find it almost impossible to imagine the logic of class analysis. "[A] triumphant middle class," he noted, "can take itself for granted."

And, from the beginning, it has. "There is no permanent class of hired laborers among us," Abraham Lin-

coln once asserted. In Lincoln's view, "the prudent, penniless beginner in the world" might need to work for a time for wages, but only until he could set up shop as a businessman himself. "If any continue through life in the condition of the hired laborer," he proclaimed, "it is not the fault of the system, but because of either a dependent nature which prefers it, or improvidence, folly, or singular misfortune."

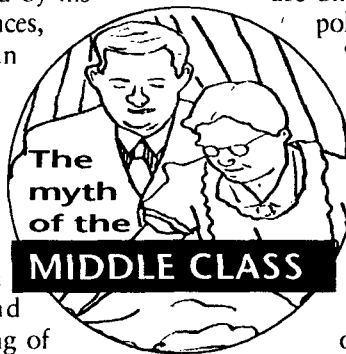
Even in Lincoln's day, arguments like these were more a function of ideology than a description of reality; by 1850 a "permanent class of hired laborers" was beginning to emerge in urban areas across the north, and slaves—while not strictly speaking "hired laborers"—had more than their own improvidence and folly to blame for their low condition.

Today the argument makes, if anything, even less sense. But it is still propounded with vigor, often spiced with an unacknowledged and usually euphemistic racism: if you

removed a few archaisms, added the word "empowerment" in a few spots, inserted a derogatory reference to the urban "underclass" and threw in a couple of well-cooked statistics, Lincoln's hoary platitudes would be indistinguishable from any number of recent pronouncements from the Washington think tanks.

If we set aside the ritualistic, largely meaningless denunciations of the rich that pop up during election season, there are only two classes that matter in American political discourse—the middle class and the "underclass." As in Lincoln's day, the middle class is seen, almost, as America itself, the repository of all that is good and true, the embodiment of our democratic promise. Politicians fight over this class like dogs for a bone.

As for the underclass, well, it's something else indeed. Wallowing in a "culture of poverty," trapped by their own dependency, the poor have only themselves to blame for their misery, and they hardly deserve the same rights as the rest of the polity. "Something has to be done with these young men," Ed Koch recently moaned, distressed by the lifestyle choices of the fictional inhabitants of the underclass in the film *Menace II Society*. "A mandatory draft, civilian in nature, is the only effective recourse..."



developed world. The top fifth of the population earns as much as all the rest put together—though “earn” might not be the right word, given what they do to get it. In the popular consciousness, families making \$100,000 or more are still described as middle class—and heaven forbid if you suggest raising their taxes!—but in reality they’re pretty close to the top of the heap: only 5 percent of Americans earn as much as they do.

But if American politicians have made too much of the idea of the middle class, those on the left have made too little of it. If American mythology holds that the middle class is (or should be) all, Marxist mythology holds that there is no such thing. Marx saw the world as divided, quite starkly, into two classes, proletariat and bourgeoisie, defined simply by who owned capital and who did not. (Sometimes Marx added landlords to the mix, transforming two classes into three.) Though he acknowledged, with some distaste, that “intermediate and transitional strata obscure the class boundaries” in many cases, he was sure such complications were “immaterial for our analysis.”

There is, I’ll admit, a refreshing clarity to traditional Marxist class analysis: by reducing the vagaries of the economic system and of human consciousness to a simple variable—whether or not someone owns capital—you can set about drawing the class lines with precision and ease. It matters little what anyone thinks: class is an objective thing. “[A] person’s class position doesn’t depend on subjective attitudes but on their actual place within the relations of production, independently of what he or she—or anyone else—might

think,” argues Alex Callinicos, a British Marxist. “A car-worker who believes himself to be middle class doesn’t cease for that reason to be a wage-laborer exploited by capital.” By these standards, nearly everyone counts as working class—from mechanics to office workers to burger-flippers at McDonald’s. And by this logic, as Callinicos argues, “[t]he core of the capitalist class ... is tiny,” even today.

In purely economic terms, this kind of analysis makes a good deal of sense; it’s an accurate description of American inequality. But politically, alas, it is almost useless. It matters a great deal if autoworkers and office workers think of themselves as middle class—or, even if they don’t, if they believe in the American mythology of success. Oppression may be conditioned largely by “objective” factors, but it is experienced subjectively—and if those who are oppressed blame themselves for their economic “failure” as wages drop and jobs disappear, they won’t even recognize the injustices they face.

For American politicians, the ritual invocation of the middle class has been a proven winner. But for America itself, the mythology of the middle class has been a disaster, diverting attention from the real injustices of a system that is far from egalitarian, ensuring that government remains in the hands of one or the other of the two, increasingly indistinguishable, political branches of America’s bipartisan elite. We can’t get beyond this morass until we can start talking, clearly and forthrightly, about class—or, to put it more bluntly, about exactly who is screwing whom. We’re *not* all in this together. ◀

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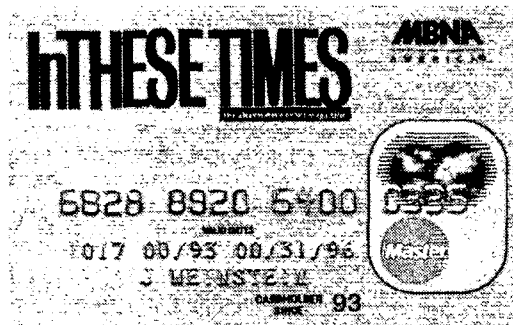
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TAXES

On the dole in the 'burbs

Don't tell me about some poor schlub who cashes in his food stamps for 50 cents on the dollar and then lives on handouts for the last half of the month. Save me your stories about folks trying to slip into a clinic on their sister's Medicaid card. That's penny-ante stuff. The real welfare queens and kings aren't in the projects—they're out in the verdant greens of the sleepy suburban villages and bustling mall-towns wrapped around our cities like hands on a throat. And those hands are squeezing the life out of America's cities with the ruthless vigor that only deep-seated hypocrisy can supply.

Forget welfare fraud in the projects; the real action is out in suburbia.

By Daryl Anderson

The whole sordid business comes into sharp focus around tax time, when suburbanites belly up to the trough of one of the most established tax "loopholes"

of the entire postwar period—the home mortgage interest deduction. As much as *one trillion dollars* in taxes may have gone uncollected in the past 50 years by the simple process of allowing predominantly suburban, middle-class homeowners to deduct interest paid on their home mortgages from taxable income.

Consider a single year as an example. The voluminous *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* shows that in 1987, 28 million tax returns deducted over \$136 billion in mortgage interest. At typical tax rates, that amounts to roughly \$30 billion in uncollected taxes or about \$1,100 in "subsidies" for each household. More than 23 million of those households were "middle class"—that is, their adjusted gross income fell between \$20,000 and \$100,000.

And even these subsidies are not parcelled out evenly; the more you earn, the more you get. Those in the lower half of this group deducted an average of \$4,045, bringing in an estimated \$600 annual subsidy; while

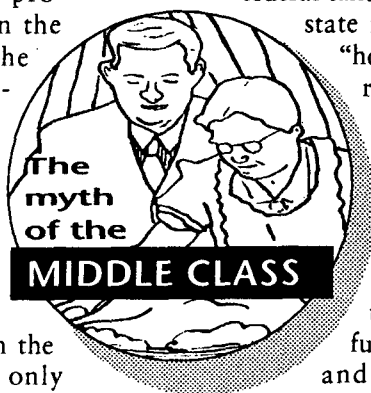
those in the upper-middle brackets deducted an average of \$5,880, raking in a subsidy of \$1,640. Those with an income over \$100,000 did even better, deducting an average of \$12,300, and receiving a subsidy of \$3,440.

Consider the subsidy to a family out in Happy Valley with a cozy new \$250,000 house and a \$200,000 mortgage. These poor folks are probably paying about \$2,000 each month on the mortgage. But since it's early in the life of the mortgage, most of that payment is deductible interest—about \$23,000 per year. Itemizing that deduction on their Schedule A will typically save them \$6,500 on their federal taxes and possibly another \$1,500 on state income tax. That \$8,000 annual

"housing subsidy" will mount up to roughly \$75,000 over 10 years—at which time the owners can sell the home (this is a "nice" neighborhood) for \$400,000 and even avoid paying taxes on the profit.

These dollars are just as real as and a whole lot more reliable than the ever-declining federal funding for "low-income" housing, and at \$666 a month probably a good deal more than the average "low-income" subsidy.

Forty years of subsidizing the single-family home has resulted in a massive cash bonus for middle-class homeowners, banks and the savings and loan industry, as well as in the mass suburbanization of the American landscape. The government not only supported the building and buying of shelter for the suburban pioneers, but paid to construct and





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maintain massive transportation networks to allow the new middle class easy access to their urban jobs and a comfortable trip home at night. This huge undertaking was not funded by the corporations who benefited most from the arrangement; once again, private interests fed on public money. The next time you read about \$100 million being spent on "outer-loop-skyway-bridge-tunnel" repairs, consider whose transportation is being subsidized.

Don't get me wrong; suburbia isn't all evil. I've been a suburbanite for eight years, and I wouldn't trade the open space, the decent schools or the low crime rate for your urban alternatives. And while middle-class suburbanites are enjoying big government's largesse, they also are paying more and more of the total share to fill up the coffers each April 15. Moreover, all those dollars flowing into banking and construction have, over the years, generated a lot of jobs.

But also consider what we did *not* get for our money: planned growth, workforces directed into sustainable infrastructure, landscapes left untarred and unmarred. Consider the subtly undemocratic and covert nature of the process: unlike Head Start or WIC funding, this subsidy does not get reconsidered, debated and reappropriated every year. Consider the essence of a "market" economy: every dollar, as it makes its rounds, is repeatedly trimmed to remove the "margin" of profit—then consider where those trimmings go. Consider the institutions that benefit most from that silent hemorrhage of wealth.

Oddly enough, it was the "revolt" of precisely those heavily subsidized middle-class taxpayers that largely spurred the ascension of the Reagan-Bush junta. Conserva-

tives argued that we could rid ourselves of the costly burden of government while unchaining the wealthy from the burdensome shackles of taxation. Americans were sold a ticket for a 12-year ride powered by the middle-class delusion that they did not, and do not, benefit from the expenditures of government.

Even now, after the "fat-cutters" have turned to hacking off muscle and bone and as the subsidized urban-suburban infrastructure crumbles, the phrase "welfare reform" brings many of my good neighbors to their feet, pointing in a fury toward the big city. They should be pointing the fingers at themselves.

But while the middle class over the years has taken more than its fair share of the public monies, the boldest thieves, the real hogs at the trough, have been the corporations and the wealthy. Looking at the effects of their looting of the public coffers over the past 12 years, it seems clear that we need meaningful, structural change in this country—change that will not come about without the active support of the middle class.

But how can we expect their support if that vast group will not acknowledge that they, too, have been subsidized and supported by the "big government" they so regularly denounce? If they accept the boost up to their small pedestal, then turn to a false doctrine of "rugged individualism" to chastise those they have climbed over, they will always be blinded to the towering monoliths that surround and oppress us all.

Daryl Anderson writes regularly for the *Buffalo Alt/Alternative Press*, and is a stay-at-home dad.

B L A C K A M E R I C A

The price of success

N

elson Mandela's fund-raising swing through this city netted him nearly \$900,000, but it was the local political leadership that gained most from his visit. And while he generally wowed the media and the masses, the celebrated South African leader clearly has lost favor with some of his oldest allies in the United States.

Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress are losing some of their longtime U.S. supporters.

By Salim Muwakkil
CHICAGO

The 75-year-old president of the African National Congress (ANC) was visiting Chicago as part of an international fund-raising campaign to help prepare black South Africans for their country's first multiracial election next April. The ANC's campaign, dubbed the "Freedom Tour," is seeking funds to finance a massive effort of political education designed to reach and convince 19 million historically disenfranchised people of the value of elections.

Since Mandela is the virtual personification of the ANC—as well as the person most experts predict

will be South Africa's next president—he is the Freedom Tour's star attraction. That celebrity status was vividly highlighted during his two-day stay in this racially sensitive city, as politicians, black and white, jockeyed vigorously to share his media halo. Illinois' Republican governor, Jim Edgar, and Chicago's Democratic mayor, Richard M. Daley, joined the Rev. Jesse Jackson and elected officials of all stripes to welcome Mandela at the city's Midway Airport. And like a pope bestowing blessings, Mandela dispensed liberal doses of political capital to his adoring entourage.

His well-photographed appearances with Mayor Daley, for example, have raised Daley's status among black Chicagoans, providing the incumbent with the electoral insulation he may need to withstand the challenge of a strong black candidate. Mandela seems untroubled by the prospect that he might be lending his hard-earned moral prestige to unworthy recipients.

Those indiscriminate associations seem motivated purely by the need to raise cash. Several supporters have complained that Mandela's tour has exhibited a money-grubbing, hucksteristic quality that seems, at best, undignified. At many points during his two-week U.S. tour, dissenters criticized the choices of his schedulers. In Washington, D.C., some members of TRANSAFRICA—one of the groups most responsible for intensifying the anti-apartheid struggle in this country—expressed dismay that Mandela was booked to meet with many corporate types who not so long ago bitterly opposed the ANC.

Similar concerns have been raised in other cities on Mandela's tour. Black nationalist organizers here wrote an open letter in the black-owned *Chicago Defender* announcing their displeasure with Mandela's itinerary: "Brother Mandela, it will be most painful to see you standing with Mayor Richard M. Daley, your official host in Chicago. Daley is a clear enemy of black people in Chicago as P.W. Botha was an enemy of blacks in South Africa. Botha to you is Daley to us."

Organizers are also concerned that the major media are casting this Mandela crusade as a civil rights campaign, similar to the struggle that preoccupied this country for 20 years. "This is a fight for liberation of a nation, not a civil rights battle," says Robert Starks, chairman of this city's Task Force on Black Political Empowerment and one of the conveners of Chicago's vigorous Free South Africa Movement.

But Mandela also made comparisons between his struggles and the civil rights movement. "You have regarded the struggle in the African continent as part of your struggle, and our victory is your victory," Mandela told a bulging crowd at Operation PUSH's headquarters on the city's South Side. "We have turned the tragedy of slavery into a

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powerful force to help your brothers and sisters on the continent of Africa," he said.

Starks is not impressed by Mandela's parallels: "The masses are not fooled. They know that their struggle is over who controls the land and its resources and wealth, not electoral politics."

While Starks still supports the ANC's political goals, he, like many African-American organizers, is increasingly critical of the group's moderate demands on the whites in power. The longtime organizer finds himself at odds with a movement he once spearheaded, just as it is gaining popular appeal. Like many groups oriented toward black nationalism, Starks' organization finds more in common with the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)—which calls for a radical redistribution of resources—than he does with the "integrationist" approach of the ANC.

The disenchantment expressed by these groups is the product of a recurring dynamic: marginal movements often become victims of their own success. The ANC, once a pariah group among whites in South Africa—and many here—is now poised on the verge of triumph. The shift from rebel outlaws to government officials is a major transition indeed and is probably most difficult for the outlaws' supporters. Accordingly, many of these ANC defectors have shifted their support to the PAC.

"Those nationalists like Starks ... thrive on their marginality," says Nate Clay, publisher of the *New Metro News* and former aide to the Rev. Jesse Jackson. "I appreciate them raising certain questions, but their opposition

to the ANC and support for the marginal PAC reveals their rather perverse need to stay on the irrelevant fringes."

Clay is a confidant of Rep. Mel Reynolds (D-IL), the Rhodes Scholar who defeated Gus Savage. Reynolds sponsored one of Mandela's most lucrative appearances, presenting him with a check for \$85,000. "Mel could have raised much more with just a little more time. Many of those corporations who had to disinvest are eager to get back into the rich South African market, and they see Mandela as the way to do it," Clay says. In his assessment, the anti-apartheid cause has been transmuted from a radical cause célèbre—with its campus shantytowns and

those pesky, pushy black protesters—to a corporate cause. And that's all right with him.

But this Freedom Tour has revealed the outlines of a new, less congenial relationship between Mandela and the many supporters who pressed his cause so valiantly for so long. And, as intra-racial violence continues in South Africa, the confusion grows. Is the \$20 million sum Mandela plans to raise on the global tour the exclusive property of the ANC? If so, why is the ANC the sole representative group of black South Africans? What about the PAC? What about the 5 million mostly Zulu followers of the Inkatha Freedom Party and Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi? And who will protect the South African masses from the well-armed wrath of the intransigent white right?

These are all questions seldom asked by the most adoring media. But they are questions that will become much more important as South Africa nears next year's April 27 election deadline.

Meanwhile, Mandela's stature continues to grow among the masses of African-Americans. Bereft of such distinguished leaders here, the professorial South African is regarded as a kind of moral celebrity. During the mass public meeting at Operation PUSH, thousands of black Chicagoans packed the building and thousands more jammed the surrounding streets just to get a glimpse of this revered international leader. Acknowledging their presence, the tour organizers dispatched workers armed with empty Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets to collect some of the crowd's cash.

C H I N A

Welcome to the boom town

The latest cultural revolution to hit Shanghai is the kind that comes with Western-style capitalism.

By Dave Lindorff
SHANGHAI, CHINA

I knew something had changed the minute I got off the plane at Shanghai Airport's gleaming new international terminal and made my way through the passport checkpoint. Instead of the grim guards who had pored minutely over my papers a year before, I was met by two scrubbed and smiling young men. They gave my documents just a cursory glance, remarked on my use of Chinese characters on my entry form and passed me on to an even less troublesome customs gate, where I was simply waved through.

The year before, my wife and I counted ourselves lucky to have gotten in with our computer, printer and fax machine. Several fellow travelers had had their computers confiscated by a border patrol clearly anxious to keep a tight lid on access to information. Now, with

Chinese stores selling everything from computers and faxes to satellite dish antennas to a cosmopolitan citizenry starved for high-tech consumer goods, such border controls seem like a quaint relic of a bygone era.

Shanghai, once one of the world's great cities, spent the last four decades in a kind of limbo. Its worldly-wise population was distrusted by Maoist hard-liners, while its still-prodigious revenues were sucked into the national treasury and its political and social life was convulsed several times by the Cultural Revolution and a string of lesser purges and pogroms. As a result, China's largest city—away from the lights of Nanjing Lu, its showcase main thoroughfare—remained a dirty gray expanse of run-down industrial structures and overcrowded housing.

Suddenly, returning after a year in Hong Kong, I found the place reborn and pulsing with life. Across the Huangbo River from the city's famous Waitan, or "Bund," an entirely new city of skyscrapers and industrial parks is springing up in Pudong. In just over one year's time, Shanghai has constructed a giant new suspension bridge to

connect the new city with the old, and four stations of a spanking new subway line, the city's first.

Nanjing Lu, long the first place tourists on official tours were brought because of its pre-Liberation European-style architecture and its fancy shops, now is almost passé and looks a bit quaint compared to new consumer meccas on Huaihai Lu and in the city's southwest district along the subway line. Indeed, construction is proceeding at such a fast and furious pace all over this sprawling metropolis that many foreign residents refer to the place as "Rubble City."

The blue or military green work clothes of yore, still prevalent last year, are hard to find today in Shanghai, where all but the old seem to be buying designer clothes from stores like U-2 and Giordanos.

But more importantly, there is a new air of optimism. When I was teaching journalism at Shanghai's Fudan University last year as a Fulbright professor, the prevailing sentiment in Shanghai remained one of cynicism toward Beijing, which it was felt had been holding the city down. "Go to Beijing," several of my friends told me. "When you see all those wide boulevards and monuments, remember that's all Shanghai's money!"

These days, Shanghai has powerful allies in Beijing and is being allowed to keep most of its own tax revenues. Both Party General Secretary and President Jiang Zemin and Senior Vice Chairman Zhu Rongji—the nation's "economic czar"—are former Shanghai mayors, while paramount leader Deng himself has singled out this city as the focus of China's next decade of development. (He also comes here when he needs medical treatment.)

But all is not rosy. With Shanghai's return to the world stage as a center of commerce and finance are coming many of the same ills that made the place infamous in prewar days. Prostitution is rampant—especially in the city's four- and five-star hotels and tourist districts, and in up-scale nightclubs where high-class whores and call girls, many of them with college degrees and good English, can earn upward of 300 yuan a night (about \$40) from Western, Japanese, Hong Kong and most recently Taiwanese businessmen. Gambling—roulette and, of course, big-stakes mahjong—is also back.

In another throwback to years gone by, other college grads—this time men—wear livery and open hotel doors for foreigners, practicing their English “good afternoons” and hoping against hope to make a connection that might land them a good job in “business.”

Meanwhile, life for the average worker's family is getting tougher. Prices in Shanghai this year jumped 19 percent officially, and maybe as much as twice that actually, while salaries rose only a little. Hard-pressed state enterprises, their state subsidies trimmed and faced with competition from imports and joint ventures, are laying off workers. These new jobless join a pool of migrants (the countryside is in near revolt in some places because of the decline in living standards), who have swelled Shanghai's population to 14 million from just 13 million a year ago, putting terrible pressure on resources in a city where most families already live in one-room, unheated, cold-water flats.

“Our life is getting harder,” said Zhang Tie-wen, a retail clerk walking past the Jinjiang Hotel near Huaihai Road.

“We buy nice clothes because we Shanghaiese have our face, but we cut back on food to buy them.”

Still, I was struck by the new sense of openness—a grabbing at new freedoms—where a year before there had been caution, especially when speaking with foreigners. That's not to say there is not repression. During the period around the anniversary of the June 4 Tiananmen massacre, Shanghai security police arrested a number of democracy and

labor activists, some of whom remain in detention. Yet Shanghai enjoys a bold and open democracy movement.

Another sign of this openness: On three separate occasions in one day on this visit, strangers I interviewed casually used the term “Gongfei” (Communist bandits) in referring to the Chinese Communist Party. This is a coinage that until recently was standard usage in Taiwan but was never uttered publicly in China. Its sudden appearance here suggests the degree of hostility that is felt by common people who see corrupt Party officials using their positions to reap the greatest benefits of Deng Ziaoping's new economic reforms.

But that anger is also beginning to find other targets, which should give Western investors pause. A taxi driver, passing the resplendent Portman Hotel complex along Nanjing Road, told me, “All this area is too expensive for us ordinary Chinese. It's just for you foreigners. It's getting to be just like before the revolution!” He laughed as he spoke, but as the rich grow richer and the poor languish, his sense of humor may eventually fail him.

It's already failed many of the poor, and now taxicabs like his—last year just open vehicles with a meter on the dash—frequently sport partitions to separate the driver from his fare, a response to a wave of armed robberies of cabbies.

Invariably, the Western businesspeople and investors I meet who have visited Shanghai come away with glowing reports of a city on the march to prosperity, and it is certainly that. But I came away with mixed feelings. The excitement and enthusiasm of those who are able to ride Shanghai's

extraordinary economic boom is contagious, as is the new sense that the rigid Communist ideological and political structure of 40-odd years is crumbling. At the same time, though, I left for Hong Kong also feeling troubled by a sense that this great port, which grew up too fast on the mud flats of the Huangbo River over a century ago, seems intent, like a California gold rush mining town, on growing too fast all over again. ◀



VIEWPOINT

Empire strikes back

By Daniel Hellinger

As liberals and neoliberals fumble about, trying to define U.S. leadership in the brave New World Order, conservative intellectuals seem to have hit upon a solution to all the confusion: bring back colonialism. The notion seems ludicrous. Even the most cursory glance at a historical atlas shows that the roots of ethnic conflict and civil disorder in most of this world were laid by colonialism in the first place. But with forces deployed in the Balkans, Indochina and over a large swath of Iraq, and with loud cries for international intervention in Liberia, Haiti and other troubled nations, it has suddenly become fashionable to urge the West, now aided by Japan, to pick up the white man's burden once again.

Hawkish scholar Samuel P. Huntington, for example, in an essay originally published in the summer edition of *Foreign Affairs* (and later reprinted in shorter form in the *New York Times*), foresees in the coming decades a clash of civilizations of epic proportions. Fundamentally neither economic nor ideological, the struggle will pit the cultural and religious traditions of the West against

those of the non-Western world, especially the "Confucian and Islamic civilizations," where "populist politicians, religious leaders and the media have found it a potent means of arousing mass support" to pressure governments hesitating to embrace the universal Western culture.

In Huntington's view, the West and "modernized Japan" need to unite, and to bring Russia and Latin America more securely under the Western tent, in the quest "to strengthen international institutions that reflect and legitimate Western interests and values." Huntington wants the West to limit the military strength of "potentially hostile civilizations" and exploit their internal differences. This, in turn, will require the U.S. and its allies to retain the enormous garrisons built during the Cold War, a policy euphemistically described as "a moderation in the reduction of Western military capabilities."

Huntington gives a nod toward the understanding of non-Western cultures and urges accommodation of some of their demands, but his grand design for U.S. policy is predicated on a grim, Hobbesian view of the world. The version of his article carried in the

Times was accompanied by a caricature depicting a giant, elongated dog in a top hat, sitting on its haunches, gnawing at the head of one of his less fortunate brethren, while below an assortment of lesser canines, wearing an assortment of nationalistic headgear, face each other, baring teeth across a narrow chasm. This caricature may represent colonialism realistically, but as an illustration of Huntington's thesis it is misleading. Huntington views the West as morally superior, not merely the largest predator in a global Jurassic Park.

Historian Paul Johnson, in a *New York Times Magazine* article titled "Colonialism's Back—and Not a Moment Too Soon," calls for nothing less than the restoration of a system under which strife-torn countries would be governed by Western nations as trustees under international mandates. According to Johnson, colonialism for centuries nobly served its purpose, "bestowing civilization on those less fortunate" until the 20th century, when it ran up against "growing restrictions imposed by liberal opinion."

In the '50s, "precisely the time when colonies were deriving the maximum benefit from European rule, the decision was taken to liberate them forthwith," Johnson complains. It would hardly occur to him that perhaps it was national resistance rather than "liberal opinion" that ended colonialism. But little matter. As Johnson sees it, former colonies are now begging us (and Westernized Japan) to return, to end the anarchy and misrule that followed the premature retreat of the colonial powers.

In Johnson's scheme, the U.N. Security Council (not, take note, the more democratically organized General Assembly) would set a limited mandate of five to 10 years for one of the culturally superior nations to exercise sovereign rights over another. But he warns that the mandates will

have to be renewed, perhaps from 50 to 100 years, so that "effective self-government" can be successful "this time." (Oddly enough, none of the foreign policy gurus dares discuss the dismal record of the United States in promoting ethnic reconciliation through democratic procedures; perhaps the ethnic conflicts in U.S. cities, such as those that burst forth in Los Angeles in 1992, might be better contained by placing our cities under international trusteeship.)

Why, now, is such a historically discredited idea once again entering into our public discourse? The arguments may perhaps be intended to soothe the twinges of conscience we might feel about bombing and occupying those patches of Earth that have failed to march in step with the New World Order—especially those like Somalia that seemed so happy to see us at first.

Huntington, for his part, has long promoted stability over other political values. His most influential academic work, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, published in 1968, opens with the Machiavellian invocation, "The most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government."

But before tarring Machiavelli with Huntington's reputation, we should recall that in the final chapter of *The Prince*, Machiavelli reminds Italian warlords of the glory of their past civilization and attempts to rally them to unite against the great powers of the day, whose "barbarian occupation stinks in the nostrils of all of us." This could be achieved, he wrote, "not through a new kind of weapon, but a new kind of [social] formation." Even though Johnson and Huntington aim their rhetoric at anarchy and violence, it is really the prospect of constructing a new "formation" or socio-economic order that scares the capitalist powers.

Reducing a warlord's or a dictator's command post to smithereens with air power might set him back for a while, but it is also likely to rally support behind him. Huntington

should have learned that as an architect of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia when he was on the National Security Council. Johnson's defense of colonialism at least has the virtue of offering a more accurate depiction of the current partnership of the United States and the United Nations.

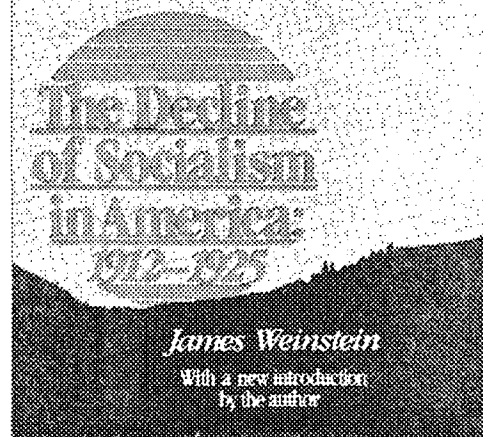
But if it is a grand new strategy that is needed, perhaps we could begin by taking seriously the commitment recently forged in Vienna to link universal human rights to the objective of a more rational and humane global economic system. Perhaps some version of "managed competition" for the international trade system could break the sterile, century-long debate between protectionism and free trade.

Rather than plan to meet demands of non-Western civilizations with force, we could link the withdrawal of U.S. troops from their far-flung out-

posts to regional disarmament and security arrangements to prevent arms races. The United States could take unilateral steps to reduce the level of world armaments, and then use this leverage to demand reciprocal moves abroad. We could promote a thorough reform of the United Nations, vesting greater authority in the General Assembly and less in the Security Council. And, of course, we could set a much better example of respect for democratic self-determination in the place where we have had the most influence, Latin America—one of the many areas where our imperial interventions have been far more barbarous than civilized. ◀

Daniel Hellinger is a professor of political science at Webster University and co-author of *The Democratic Facade* (Wadsworth).

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VIEWPOINT

Give war a chance

By Tim Wohlforth

We are now at a defining moment of the post-Cold War world. A new pattern of U.S. foreign interventions is rapidly emerging—and the American left must come up with new responses.

The first crisis the era produced was the Gulf War, a war that is far from over, as Bill Clinton's air attack on Iraq has so recently reminded us. When George Bush first ordered the bombing of Baghdad in 1990, most of us on the left opposed the war. We could be confident in our protests, because this was a conflict we on the left understood.

Both the U.S. and Europe, we rightly concluded, were acting to protect their economic interest in the region—oil. A crisis-ridden Russia acquiesced in the vain hope of getting some crumbs from the West. Conflict between the two superpowers had been replaced by the world domination of the victor: the United States.

Then Bush threw a curve at American leftists with his intervention in Somalia. A few knee-jerk types simply applied the Gulf War analysis to Somalia and concluded that Bush was carrying out a clever

plot to impose American imperial interests in the region. Most of us were uncomfortable with that analysis, however. There was no other power, major or minor, challenging the United States anywhere near the Horn of Africa. Nor did that stretch of dusty land have much economic value to anybody.

Most of all, it was difficult for many of us to oppose intervention when we could see what the chaotic situation in the country was doing to its people. The only alternative the left had to supporting Bush's intervention was to do nothing. That was not a morally defensible position.

This placed the left in a quandary. Unless we took the sterile position of opposing any military intervention involving U.S. troops—with or without

United Nations sanction—we found ourselves in a world where we had to pick and choose our interventions. Those who opposed all U.S. interventions were at a loss to come up with another nation that could act when women were raped, children starved, tribal and national groups "cleansed." This is why the left has been completely unprepared for Bosnia.

Somalia proved that the Gulf War by itself has not defined post-Cold War policy. Bosnia has shown us that Somalia is not the pattern-maker either. Bosnia, like Somalia, lacks any economic or strategic interests for the West. However, the moral imperative for intervention in Bosnia is at least as strong as it was for Somalia. For policy-makers, the central difference is that action in Bosnia is more difficult to undertake, the costs possibly higher, the risk of failure greater. Thus, the U.S. and Europe have refused to act in a decisive way.

Bosnia and its people are going down the tubes. Emboldened by the refusal of the U.S. to use military force to defend the Bosnian Muslims, the Serbs and Croats are dividing the country between themselves, leaving only two unconnected morsels for the Muslims. Aggression and ethnic cleansing is being rewarded. To make matters worse, the Europeans, with American complicity, are twisting the arms of the victims to force them to accept the destruction of their country in the interests of "peace." (Or should we say "pieces"?)

Clinton's recent missile attack on Baghdad was designed to reassure Americans that the president is decisive, that he can be just as tough a cop as Bush. He chose his target carefully, like a rookie patrolman in a rough neighborhood. Far from being a sign of American strength, Clinton's action actually reveals U.S. impotence. Why, the Muslim world in particular asks, does Washington bomb Saddam Hussein yet fail to act in Bosnia?

***The U.S. left must
learn to support
morally justified
military action.***

What then is Western policy for the post-Cold War era? The U.S. will act decisively, as it did in the Gulf War, if its imperial interests are directly threatened. In other cases, it will act, in concert with its Western allies and through the United Nations, when it is relatively easy to so act. When risks are involved, morality be damned.

We should not have expected anything better from Clinton. He told us during the election campaign that Bush had paid too much attention to international affairs. Americans cheered him for that stance—and we on the left cheered the loudest. Clinton has been as good as his word, and he has found in Warren Christopher his perfect secretary of state, one who loves negotiations as a substitute for action. Christopher's job is to see that the United States does not have a foreign policy, so that Clinton can concentrate on domestic matters.

It would be a mistake to see Clinton's newfound bellicosity as a sign of a significant shift away from this neo-isolationism. Shooting off some rockets from the safe haven of a couple of battleships is a far cry from a world strategy of peace and prosperity. It seems more like a fireworks display for the American public—only a week away from the Fourth of July.

This neo-isolationism presents us with a paradox: the world's policeman no longer wishes to leave the precinct station and walk the beat. In part, Clinton is comforting a public weary of the high costs of battling the "Evil Empire" over the past 45 years. Clinton also represents an America coming to grips with its own limitations. Washington no longer possesses the economic strength to support such a stance.

Europe and Japan prospered under the old world order by acquiescing to American power and thereby avoiding the heavy economic burdens of a large military establishment. These countries show little inclination to assist the world's top cop. NATO's paralysis in Bosnia expresses this reality. Having lost its *raison d'être* with the passing of the Cold War, it has refused to act

even in its own backyard. It remains a holding operation to ensure that the former Soviet states do not backslide.

The essential character of Western post-Cold War policy can be summed up in one word: smugness. The Western powers, convinced that they have won the Cold War, wish to enjoy this victory by selling their products around the world, while the United Nations provides cover. This represents not only arrogance toward the weak, but it also expresses a Panglossian view that we can allow the rest of the world to fall to pieces without, in time, falling apart as well.

The left has not been able to develop a serious alternative to this worldwide drift. For many on the left, this paralysis is a result of the loss of the "socialist" camp. Once, many on the left could see the world as a conflict between the imperialist "bad guys" and socialist "good guys." Now there are only bad guys. Perhaps that is all there ever were—but at least in the good old days we had the comfort of our illusions.

I suggest that the left still has much it could be saying and doing. We have reached a time in the world's history when the moral course is in the interests of all the world's peoples. We became socialists because we possess an ability to place ourselves in the shoes of others, to feel as they do. We cannot see pictures on our TV

sets of the genocide of a people—like the Bosnian Muslims—without feeling compelled to act. History teaches us that to permit injustice without attempting to do something about it threatens the stability of the entire world.

We must favor international intervention, including military action, in Bosnia. This should be truly international action carried out through the U.N. Yet the reality is that such U.N. initiatives require American support and an American content. We need to work toward the establishment of a permanent United Nations peace force to act in similar situations around the world. We must oppose interventions, such as in the Gulf War and the recent missile attacks, which are carried out to further imperial interests rather than those of the people (whether or not it is carried out under the U.N. imprimatur).

We must learn to distinguish one kind of intervention from the other. We must put on our marching shoes, unfurl our banners and raise our fists in the air, demanding military action when it is morally required, just as we do when condemning military action when it is morally reprehensible. ◀

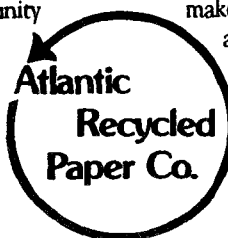
Tim Wohlforth is author of *The Prophet's Children*, a memoir of life on the left, to be published by Humanities Press in September.



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VIEWPOINT

Strength through peace

By Rep. Ronald V. Dellums

Two-thirds of Americans apparently approved of President Clinton's "decisive" military retaliation against Iraq's alleged attempt to assassinate former President George Bush. Even some of my congressional colleagues who usually resist the giddy excitement generated when our military "kicks a little butt" applauded the president's action. I dissent.

Acts of state terrorism must not go unanswered. Nevertheless, I believe the military course was ill-advised. Diplomatic and legal means exist to challenge Iraq for having conspired to assassinate former President Bush. By pursuit of redress through these mechanisms, we would have defended our honor and better promoted our long-term interests.

I save for another day my deep concern that President Clinton, like his predecessors, has undertaken an act of war without following our Constitution's requirement that such decisions be authorized by Congress.

Surely, as the world's sole remaining superpower we did not need to demonstrate our *capacity* to strike a

deadly blow against Iraq. We demonstrated that ability in Desert Storm when Iraq maintained far more military competence and manifest external ambitions.

Many argue that had we not "defended our nation's honor" in the face of the certainly heinous threat to the Bushes' lives, other nations would

As the sole superpower—and, in Gen. Colin Powell's words, the biggest potential "bully on the block"—the United States must establish a foreign policy that leads by example of restraint.

have questioned our resolve. But few seek the necessary inquiry: what resolve should we demonstrate?

I insist that our all too apparent willingness to resort to military force in the face of international terrorism bears little relation to showing a resolve to defend our honor. The litany of recent and not-so-recent military actions is too abundant for our friends and potential adversaries to soon forget.

Indeed, some of our closest allies perceive our attack on Baghdad as an over-reaction. And many in the developing world—especially Muslims—consider it unjustified, disproportionate, perhaps based on circumstantial evidence, and emblematic of a double standard in dealing with international law and human rights violations. Thus, it becomes more difficult to achieve important non-proliferation, conventional arms control and conflict-mediation strategies essential to our effort to enhance opportunities to stabilize troubled regions.

Furthermore, our vision that our weapons will perform flawlessly and surgically, without civilian casualties, has again proven false. We must find avenues to redress our grievances and defend our interests other than those that result in the tearful excavation of civilians from the craters created either by car bombs or by cruise missiles.

As the sole superpower—and, in Gen. Colin Powell's words, the biggest potential "bully on the block"—we must lead by the example of restraint. We claim self-defense under Article 51 of the U.N. charter, yet it clearly notes that a member nation may act "in self-defense if an armed attack occurs against [that country], until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security."

Surely, international peace and security were no more threatened on the day that the White House became convinced that the evidence pointed to an Iraqi plot to assassinate President

Bush than it had been the day before. Surely, we had time and opportunities for consultation, for coalition building, for the development of further strategies to compel the Iraqi state to comply with the construct of international law and civilized behavior.

In addition, the U.N. has specifically ruled that retaliatory strikes do not

qualify as self-defense under Article 51. In a 1964 conflict between Yemen and Great Britain, for example, the Security Council, by a vote of 9 to 0 with 2 abstentions, condemned "reprisals as incompatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations."

Other avenues exist for defending our interests. I believe that the United

States has a critical opportunity to change the course of world history, from war to peace, from belligerency to negotiation and settlement. We must acquire the courage to forbear from acts of military violence in the name of pride, position and face. We should abandon the antiquated doctrine that an eye will be extracted for an eye and seek justice in more civilized and enduring forums.

As the most powerful nation on earth, we are in a position to tolerate the greatest affronts, demonstrate the greatest maturity and provide the surest and most confident leadership to a world community that still struggles to define what the post-Cold War universe will look like.

Let us base that vision on the promise of the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and not on the archaic view that might makes right, or that war is just an extension of our foreign policy.

The International Court of Justice exists precisely to adjudicate claims such as our current dispute with Iraq. We should sue in the court, marshal and submit our evidence that Iraq plotted to kill a former U.S. president, plead for relief and abide by the Court's judgment. Enforcement of sanctions and relief adjudged by the Court would then be achieved through the U.N. Security Council.

Such a course would coalesce world opinion to condemn Iraq's apparently callous disregard of international norms. Our military action has fractured world opinion about what it perceives as an increasingly bilateral struggle between the U.S. and Iraq.

It takes greater courage and more confidence to resist the military impulse to strike back in retribution, but it is the right course and will prove to our enduring benefit. ◀

Rep. Ronald V. Dellums, a Democrat from California's 9th Congressional District, is chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. His vision of a post-Cold War military appeared in the March 22 issue of *In These Times*.



I N P R I N T

Boiling mad

By Lawrence Goodwyn

Kevin Phillips easily avoids Emerson's strictures against foolish consistency: he is not small-minded. Readers on the right and left who, informed by Phillips' previous efforts, assume they know where he is headed, will be routinely surprised by this closely argued and, at times, driven book.

Little wonder. It has been almost a quarter of a century since Phillips first unveiled his racially stark blueprint for conservative ascendancy, *The Emerging Republican Majority*. It is well known that the strategies outlined in this Nixon-era document, subsequently pushed to Reaganite extremes, culminated in the effective demagoguery of the Willie Horton ad. Under such cultural protection, Republicans were able to implement economic policies that during the 12 years of their reign generated the most massive redistribution of income in American history—from the very poorest to the very richest. While these excesses have appalled progressives of every hue, the long-term dynamics have left Kevin Phillips in anguish as well.

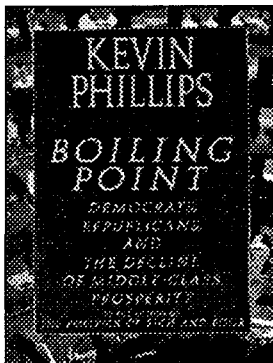
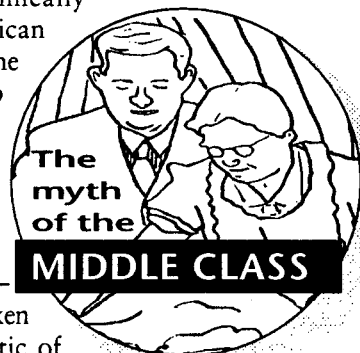
Though he occasionally strains to put some distance between himself and these causal relationships (as he also did in his 1990 book, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*), such asides in his new book need not detain us long. His personal reputation aside, it is now evident that Kevin Phillips is visibly worried about the soul of the republic. In his own way, he harbors elemental communitarian concerns; what surfaces again and again throughout *Boiling Point* is the author's

growing conviction that this value—the very idea that there is, out there, an American commonweal—has vanished from the influential circles of Republican policy-makers. The dynamics of the book unfold along this faultline: Phillips is convinced that most Americans have been systematically flim-flammed, if not economically raped, by prevailing Republican politics and that someone in the conservative family needs to say so in clear terms.

There are those who will argue, possibly with considerable heat, that this insight has been, for Phillips, an egregiously long time in coming—far too long for him to be taken seriously as an informed critic of contemporary life and politics. This seems ungenerous. Given the range of economic and political crises afflicting this country, virtually any development that offers the prospect of improving the impoverished national dialogue should be welcomed. In any event, we have here 300 carefully argued pages attesting to the depth of one conservative's personal indignation and despair at his discovery that so many otherwise substantial people are so bent on maximizing their own personal gain that they've simply said to hell with everybody else.

Phillips mounts a broad-based attack, arguing that whatever Reaganomics has done to America's poorest citizens, the impact of the same policies on average Americans has had a more destructive long-term significance. The precision of this concern is evident in the meticulous care he visits upon the central abstraction of his book—the “middle-class” enshrined in his subtitle. In Phillips' hands, the middle class is no vague term of description, as it has conventionally become on the American political hustings. Rather, it is an economic category that can be spliced and subdivided with great precision—and in especially telling ways when the government's own statistical chicanery (the Bush administration's “passion for subterfuge”) is dissected and the results applied to the day-to-day economics of most Americans.

**Boiling Point:
Republicans, Democrats
and the Decline of
Middle-Class Prosperity**
By Kevin Phillips
Random House
307 pp., \$23



In Phillips' reading of American history, this is the third time that speculative greed has carried the nation into structural economic crisis, the other two being marked by the depressions of the 1890s and 1930s. In the middle-class dislocations that ensue at such moments, large sectors of

the population, not too well informed politically, lurch between a kind of teeth-clenched cultural conservatism and an equally threatening economic radicalism. For Phillips, this “centrist extremism” is an organic peril to democracy. Prudent conservatives, he thinks, should throw their weight behind economic policies designed to ameliorate the social anxieties that encourage such mindlessness. The historically informed verdict is clear: the basic policies of the Reagan era must be reversed.

One way to present such an interpretation for conservative consumption is to argue that excessive class politicking by Republicans will inevitably ensure their electoral defeat. Phillips did this in his 1990 book, emphasizing the compelling economic rhetoric available to Democrats. Denounced by many hard-line Republican partisans for handing a blueprint to the enemy camp, Phillips is, nevertheless, not much consoled by the recent electoral results, however accurate they have rendered his predictions to have been. Democratic presidential aspirants seem psychologically incapable of hewing to a properly compelling and properly prudent populist course. The underlying economic dislocations remain unaddressed, and centrist extremism therefore continues as a functioning social component of contemporary politics—as the continued popularity of Ross Perot attests.

Given the elaborate available evidence of Democratic Party hesitancy, Phillips is able—even in a book written before Clinton demonstrated his capacity to climb to new plateaus of immobility—to construct an indictment of the “other party” that is both brief and effective. But what stands out in the course of this appraisal is the ominous cultural authority of the well-heeled Washington think tanks that have been able to create a context for contemporary debate that is so narrow as to leave serious policy remedies beyond the effective reach of mere mortals.

Indeed, it is in this context that the driving thrust of the author’s maturing trajectory can be clearly discerned. Kevin Phillips has become deeply offended by, and seemingly permanently estranged from, the political mentality within the Washington Beltway. A society organized to maximize benefits for the “top 1 percent economy” is defended by “its own well-funded intellectual champions” in the American Enterprise Institute, the Hudson Institute, the Manhattan Institute and myriad lesser-known centers. The hired guns of the think tanks have been “ever ready to contend that critical studies or statistics were wrong, that America’s true weakness lay in eroded family values or a pernicious politics of ‘envy,’ or to

argue that the rich hadn’t really done that well (or if they had, it made no difference because the ranks of ‘the rich’ were always changing).” The statistical misrepresentations embedded in such crass intellectual lobbying occupies the author for several chapters. He takes pains to point out, among other things, that the \$235 billion needed annually to service the \$4 trillion debt goes to high-income bondholders, while the money to make the payments is raised in broad-based taxes.

It is a measure of Kevin Phillips’ indignation that he makes his case against Reaganomics much better than Democratic politicians routinely have been able to manage. This outcome may be taken as a sign of residual health on the margins of conservative circles or, alternately, as a sad verification of the comatose state of progressive politics. While *Boiling Point* does not rank with William Greider’s pathbreaking study, *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy*, it is, nonetheless, a serious analysis of the duplicity inherent in contemporary politics.

Lawrence Goodwyn, who teaches history at Duke University, is the author of two studies of popular politics, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* and *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* (both Oxford).



The baby boom goes bust

By David Moberg

Anthropologist Katherine S. Newman traveled to the pseudonymous New Jersey suburb of "Pleasanton" to see how the middle-class natives there are responding to a changing American economy. As she reports, they are frustrated, resentful and just a bit confused over the fate of the baby-boom generation—those born from 1947 to 1964.

For the first time in history, it seems to them, a generation of American children will not have as high a standard of living as their parents did. For both parents and children this betrays what Newman identifies as the core American belief in progress, defined as upward mobility, which in turn is identified as having ever-higher incomes and more material goods than one's parents. For many Pleasantonians, the American dream has gone sour, but they're unclear about whom or what to blame.

Unlike many earlier ethnographies of American communities, *Declining Fortunes* does not strongly evoke a sense of Pleasanton, a stand-in for all of the middle-income suburbs that grew in the years after World War II. Pleasanton was populated by a white but otherwise ethnically heterogeneous assortment of offspring of various urban immigrant communities, though the transcendent ideology of upward mobility masked ethnic and status tensions. The men worked at relatively secure, long-term jobs that ranged from skilled blue-collar to professional and middle management. Mothers nurtured children and tended the shrines of the cult of domesticity. Over the years, their modestly priced houses with low-interest mortgages appreciated into substantial wealth for retirement.

The children of depression and war, these young settlers of postwar Pleasanton rode the crest of a wave of pent-up

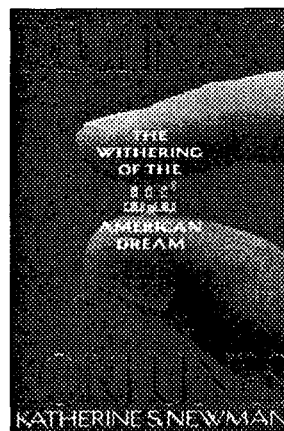
consumer demand reinforced by government investment—from highway programs to the GI Bill—to create a materially comfortable new middle-class culture. Newman quite appropriately describes it as a mass Horatio Alger story, since the success of the city's residents was a mix of both pluck and luck—good timing and public subsidy—that they remember mainly as a story of individual hard work and initiative.

Their children, however, have felt the afflictions of rapidly rising home prices, occupational insecurity and blocked mobility on the job, Newman argues. They've experienced a cost-of-living squeeze. Even with two adults now working in most families rather than one, it is difficult to match their parents' standards of living.

Newman's research doesn't conclusively demonstrate, though, if this sense of downward mobility is more than a subjective feeling. The overall national statistics, of course, reveal falling rates of home-ownership, growing debt for young people, rising inequality and stagnation or decline in personal incomes. A typical young couple in 1990 found a starter home 21 percent more expensive than they would have in 1970, but their family income was 7 percent lower than two decades earlier.

Yet Newman has only elicited perceptions and feelings, not more objective data, from the parents and children she interviewed about decline within families. She doesn't compare household budgets between generations, or the material circumstances of young families and their parents of the '50s and '60s. Such an investigation would have greatly enriched our understanding, either by confirming or questioning the widespread perceptions of decline. Are young people simply spending their money on computers, CD players and better cars, griping because they don't have even more? After all, most of these families—parent and child—are fairly well off, as she notes, even if there is a decline. And Newman doesn't fully address a point conservatives are likely to make, that at any time there is likely to be some social "churning," with the offspring of some well-off families declining while children of poorer families rise.

Despite those limitations, it is still valuable for Newman to tell how frustrated the "boomer" families are with their standard of living and what they are thinking and doing about it. Newman reports that many of them and their parents blame urban minorities on welfare for eating up their taxes (no surprise there). Yet they also blame new



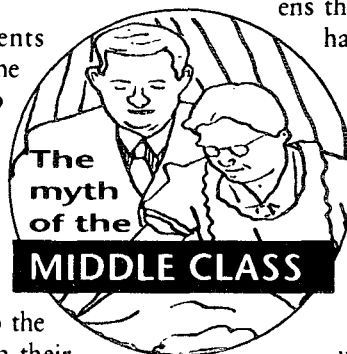
**Declining Fortunes:
The Withering of
the American Dream**
By Katherine S. Newman
Basic Books
257 pp., \$23



Asian elites who are moving into Pleasanton and bidding up the cost of housing. Although these families are hard-working, disciplined and motivated—just what the overwhelmingly white natives say they want from urban blacks—Pleasantonians resent them for failing to join existing community institutions and, ironically, for striving too hard.

Some of the older generation partly blame their own children for spending too freely and expecting too much without hard work and deferred gratification. Many blame the politics and culture of the '60s, including feminism, for disrupting the old order. There are also a few voices—mainly from those who were part of the '60s political ferment—denouncing rich elites and an insensitive government. But the overall tone is one of a non-ideological conservatism, born of anxiety and an intensely privatized approach to life.

In part, the decline Pleasanton residents lament is rooted in the suburban culture of the successful postwar generation. Their flight to the suburbs set in motion a pattern that has intensified over the years, of people seeking to flee society and create privatized utopias disconnected from the world around them. This reinforced the individualism that has long been a hallmark of American culture and its typical blame-the-victim response to the poor. By denying the governmental role in their success, this first postwar generation ignored the problems of those who had been left out—especially blacks—and failed to champion adequate public policies to sustain the postwar boom, such as support for affordable housing, education and infrastructure.



The political movements of the '60s challenged the nation's militarism and imperial overreach, the ingrained racism, the purely instrumental approach to work and career, and the suburban woman's cult of domesticity. But the stridency of the later new left simply gave further excuses for the reaction against the critique, which led to a largely conservative era that coincided with a period of economic decline. The "declining fortunes" now lamented have a foundation in the earlier success.

Originally, the American dream was a dream of a particular kind of society, of the "city on a hill." It became a dream of class mobility, of rising from wage earner or indentured laborer to independent craftsman, farmer or merchant. In the latter 19th century, the dream of being master of one's own economic fate was increasingly transmuted into aspiration for home ownership. By the '20s American political ideals were increasingly channeled into consumer desires. Postwar suburbanization created self-selected communities based on income and consumption styles, and freedom increasingly became the freedom to buy what one wanted.

In Pleasanton, much of the cultural war is fought over women and domestic life. On the one side are young people who feel both the pressure of economic decline to have two family paychecks and the aspiration for the good life that they learned growing up in Pleasanton. On the other are those who cling to the model of the "moral mother" and ideal family forged in '50s suburbia, who think that women shouldn't work and should stay home with their children.

There is yet another division, Newman reports, between the boomers who came of age during the tumultuous '60s and early '70s and those who came of age in the Reagan era. Although she describes them as a divided generation, it makes as much sense to talk of them as two "generations," since generation is less a fixed biological cohort than a cultural construction of group identity that is usually based on some common core experience.

Both sets of boomers are frustrated by declining fortunes, but the earlier ones often retain a sense of social commitment and individual pursuit of meaning that softens the blow. The later boomers, Newman argues, have more often ignored social ideals and personal meaning in order to play by conventional, conservative rules, but the golden ring still remains out of reach for them.

Because of this division, Newman argues, the huge bloc of Americans born from 1947 to 1964 are not likely to form a unified political force to demand a reversal of their declining fortunes. But, focusing mainly on the experience of a "generation," Newman understates the extent to which the Pleasanton generations are divided by class despite being labeled "middle class." Politically, the problem may be less the fragmentation of the boomer generation than the inability of the various segments of blue- and white-collar workers to find a common identity and a common cause. ◀

Continued from page 40

unconsciously and gracefully.

3. At home, keep your wall-to-wall carpeting. Buy a Rainbow system for cleaning.

4. Wear navy or black pantyhose. Work toward a basic, packaged successful-female look. Choose suits with silky blouses. Wear mid-height, closed-toe dark shoes.

5. Wear less turquoise and no dangling hoop jewelry that looks like it came from the cottage-bead-and-feather industry of an eastern Oklahoma Native American tribe.

6. Phase out the soup cookbook. Emphasize homemade salad dressings, romaine and designer pasta.

7. Compost and recycle. Experiment with bedding plants other than marigolds.

8. Start saying, "Between you and I," and "Whom shall I say is calling?" Prefer "eye-thur" to "ee-ther." Same for "neither."

9. Meditate on Bill Moyers' ideas in spare time. Watch even more C-Span.

10. Think Smirnoff, PaineWebber, Marriott.

11. Stay a United Methodist.

For more information (confidentiality assured), write 2023 W. 11th Ave., Stillwater, OK 74074. (It's the house on the corner with *no marigolds*.) ◀

Alvena Bieri makes a very respectable living as a writer and church janitor.

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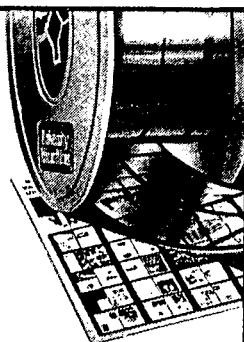
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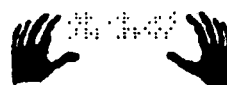
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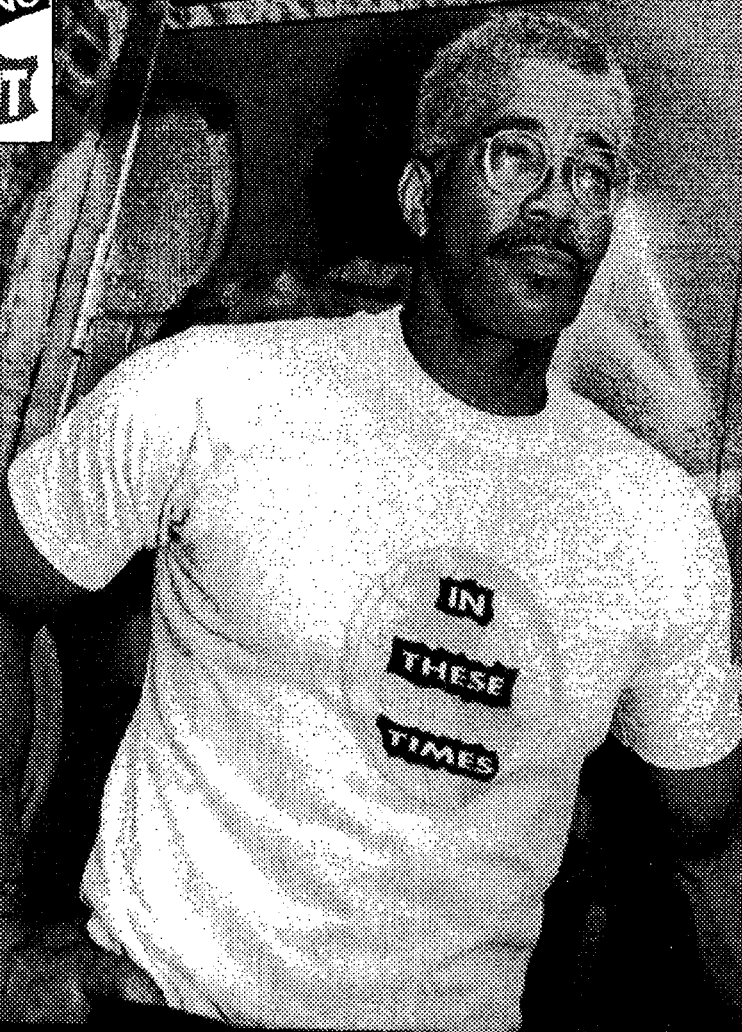
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I N T H E E N D

How to pass as middle class

By Alvena Bieri



SMALL TOWEL RACK
ATTACHED TO UNDER
SIDE OF HAMPER LID.



"Hi. I'm Alvena.
And I'm a poor person."
"Hi, Alvena!"

This is the way we talk at PPA, Poor People Anonymous, a support group in my town. Unlike the more well-known 12-step programs, PPA uses just four steps. But they're good ones. Admit that you're powerless over poverty. (I guess this one was the hardest for me to accept, but there's a lot of truth in it.) Second, trust in your Higher Power, called Her or Him, either one. Resolve to make amends to those you've hurt by your condition. (This one was a little puzzling because I think the main person I've hurt is myself.) And then go back out on your own.

I went to Poor People for about six months and I'm now pretty independent. At first I had a few doubts about the group. (Heck, some of the members didn't look that poor—and our meetings took place in an Episcopal church.) But mostly it was a good experience, and I learned enough to recommend it to others. PPA does good work. Being in PPA taught me that even though I worked regularly, poverty was really just a part of my problem. And since it was my personal goal to look, act and think middle class, I would ultimately have to work the specifics out for myself.

Putting it simply, I decided to try to pass as a bona fide member of the middle class. Light-skinned African-Americans used to pass as white. Some lesbians and gays say they pass as straight. It makes life simpler. And so far, passing has gone extremely smoothly for me.

I wrote these "notes to myself" as my basic guide to passing. Maybe they can help others.

1. Realize that as a female a lot of my personal poverty problem is being caused by white men who basically run the world. Resolve to quit fraternizing so much with the enemy.

2. Work on my personal parameters, as we used to say in group. Learn to love money more. Get empowered to look, think and act middle class at all times,

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